IMAGE OF LIFE

BY

JOHN O. BEATY

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FICTION

Swords in the Dawn

CRITICISM

Image of Life

An Introduction to Poetry
(with Jay B. Hubbell)

An Introduction to Drama
(with Jay B. Hubbell)

BIOGRAPHY

John Esten Cooke, Virginian

GEOGRAPHY

Race and Population

Outline Maps for English Literature
(with Edwin Foscue)

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Decadent Sentimentalism in Twentieth Century Literature

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WHAT term can be applied to an age? With what word can a critic or a historian name a period in the affairs of mankind? In each era there is much good and much evil and there is much struggle along the border between good and evil. There are those who cling tenaciously, even religiously, to the old, merely because it is old, and those who would embrace any idea provided it is new. There are those who retire to the study to meditate on the destiny of man and those who hasten to distant lands to barter what they have for what they want, or to bring back a new species of fruit or a new wild flower.

How then can an age in the affairs of mankind be summed up in a word or a phrase? Are

literary historians justified in using such terms as the "Renaissance," or the "age of Classicism," or the "age of Romanticism"? With immediate admission of the fact that no one of these terms and no other term can describe all the complex threads woven into the fabric of any one period of man's struggles and man's progress, it is yet true that each of these terms is beyond question useful in indicating the prevailing drift of ideas and in describing the major efforts of men in the periods to which the terms are applied.

What then is the term that can correspondingly be applied to the early twentieth century? A contemporary viewpoint can not be so safe as a later one, and no age has exceeded the present in the number of complex forces pushing it hither and thither. But with due allowance for the likelihood of error in a contemporary estimate, and with due admission of the complexity of the age, it yet seems that the most apt term to be applied to the early twentieth century is *decadent sentimentalism. Sentimental-*

ism may be defined as an exhibition of feeling in a more or less exaggerated degree, especially if the feeling is directed upon subjects not previously the recipients of sympathy. The earliest conspicuous exponents, Colley Cibber and Richard Steele, emphasized exaggerated feeling, but the recipients of sympathy were not necessarily or usually unworthy. The adjective *decadent* in describing contemporary sentimentalism is however obligatory, since sentimentalism in the twentieth century no longer includes merely exaggerated or unreasonable sympathy for worthy people but has been extended to embrace the dangerous and degraded element among mankind.

The appropriateness of the term decadent sentimentalism may be first dealt with by disposing of possible alternative designations which might be applied to the current period.

Certainly the outstanding achievements of the age have been won in medicine and engineering and the allied sciences. It is thus quite

possible that future critics and historians may name the age from some significant and permanent contribution to humanity made in this period. An age is not necessarily named for its imaginative literature. The half century following 1775 in America is not, for example, named for the work of Joel Barlow and the numerous other epic poets of the time, but for the state papers of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison and the events that underlie these state papers. Likewise, something today not primarily literature may loom large enough into the future to give the age its chief monuments and its name. The development of the talking picture and the radio will surely be considered very seriously by future historians of the current period. That these mechanical innovations and their literary products will name the age seems now unlikely, however, since they have from their beginning reflected the age rather than shaped it. Government also is in too much flux, in too many violent controversies, for the

age to be named directly from any one trend in government.

Two terms have been used in describing the literature of the period, but both are open to serious objections.

Much is heard of *realism*, but the term can be applied only in the fields of art and literature—not in government, for instance—and even in art and literature the term itself is ill-chosen and the works to which it is applied are inherently without value if one may trust the principles laid down by the accepted critics since Aristotle. These "realistic" works, moreover, have not been embraced by the general public, and for a further reason, therefore, have no right to consideration in the naming of the age.

The term *imagism* is likewise often heard, but it is applied to a very limited part of the intellectual output of the contemporary world, and its very use as a term describing a movement in poetry is—if the term can be properly applied to that poetry—its sentence of inferior-

ity. All great poetry has reason, emotion, and the image. In balanced proportion, Shakespeare had all, Milton had all. Pope may have emphasized reason and Wordsworth may have emphasized emotion, but the works of both men show all three qualities. If modern poetry has value, it likewise has all three characteristics, and any special emphasis on imagism is certainly of such minor importance that the term "the period of imagism" may be discarded forthwith.

No other term is widely enough used to warrant mention as an alternative epithet for the current period, and decadent sentimentalism may be accepted as the term most applicable to the age or, beyond any dispute, most applicable to much that is prevalent in the age.

In Twentieth Century America, décadent sentimentalism is seen in public affairs, in art, and in literature.

Those who direct public affairs in the twentieth century concern themselves far less with

the worthy than with the unworthy. The American people and their elected officials have in recent years thought all too little about the problems of decent young men and women who are marrying or would like to marry, but have taken a great deal of thought for the criminals and the insane—even to the extent of providing for them quarters and food surpassing those of their fellow-citizens from the same background who are law-abiding and sane! The sentimental fear that an officer may hurt a robber or a murderer has thrown so many hampering laws about our peace officers that crime has flourished until it has become America's biggest business, bigger than agriculture, manufacturing, or transportation. The criminally insane are likewise so sentimentally regarded that a killer may escape the deserved penalty of death by pleading—not extenuating circumstances, but—insanity!

The sentimental interest in decadent subjects constitutes a very large part of the whole story

of modern art, whether the "art" is carved on marble, wrought in bronze, or painted on canvas. For all three mediums abundant examples can be afforded by a stroll through the Museum of Modern Art in New York, or by the perusal of a picture paper reviewing any current exhibit of sculpture and painting, or by a glance at any one of several periodicals devoted to "art." The allied fields of architecture and magazine illustration must not, however, be condemned with sculpture and painting. Architecture has progressed mightily in the twentieth century, and illustration, today as always, serves its purpose, touched by decadent sentimentalism only in the more corrupt magazines.

But the purpose of this chapter is to examine neither officialdom, whose policies are shaped by sentimental voters, nor art, with its sickly and distorted current pictures and statues. The purpose is to examine the field of modern literature in the widest sense and to point out the prevalence and insidiousness of a large body of

this literature which deals in a dangerous manner with crime, and is allied to and provocative of crime.

The rise of decadent sentimentalism should, perhaps, be first considered historically. That decadent sentimentalism is the dominant factor in recent American literature is not altogether surprising, for the line of development has been direct for more than three centuries. A commendable effort to find serious literary subjects not only in royal and aristocratic backgrounds but in the middle classes and among the worthy poor has recently been perverted into the portrayal of members of criminal classes.

Spenser (1552?-1599) and Shakespeare (1564-1616), the two great imaginative geniuses of the first flowering of literature in modern English—English that can be read today without special training—belong as much to the literature of present-day America as to the literature of present-day Britain. The stream of literature could not divide into two branches

before colonization was effected. In fact, one might argue from the popularity of such an American author as Longfellow in England and that of such British authors as Tennyson and Dickens in America, as well as from the common use of the English language, that the stream has never divided.

Be that as it may, Spenser and Shakespeare, the first great names in modern literature in English, were intellectual aristocrats. Spenser's very title, *The Fairy Queen,* indicates clearly enough the nature of the subject-matter of the masterpiece left unfinished by the untimely death of its ambitious author eleven years after the Armada was scattered by Francis Drake and eight years before Captain John Smith guided the first English-speaking "Americans" toward Jamestown Island in Virginia. But a contemporary of Spenser illustrates the point even better. Within a half-dozen years of Spenser's death, William Shakespeare produced four tragedies, *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello,* and *King*

Lear, which are generally regarded as the finest dramatic expression of the English genius, if not the finest dramatic expression of the tragic instinct of the human race.

It is not accidental that the heads of the state are principal characters in each of these plays. A usurping king of Denmark and a prince shut off from his hopes of the throne; great men and a great evil woman in conflict for the throne of Scotland; the gentle daughter of a Doge and her insanely jealous lover, the General of the Armies of Venice; a king of Britain and his princess daughters—loyal and disloyal: these lofty persons are the protagonists of the "four great tragedies," *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello,* and *King Lear.*

But the story is scarcely different in the case of Shakespeare's comedies and romances, choose where one will. In that delightful light masterpiece, *Love's Labor's Lost,* the lady who seeks scholastic seclusion is the daughter and heiress of a king, and the man who dissuades

her from her zeal for study is, as a matter of course, a king with a throne. In the ever young *Twelfth Night*, the hero is a reigning duke and all the important characters except those meant to be funny are of noble blood. Likewise in Shakespeare's late and decidedly different romance, *A Winter's Tale,* the leading characters are royal.

The reason is not far to seek. Shakespeare was a man on the up-grade. He not only portrayed aristocrats in his plays, but he took the first steps toward elevating his family to the aristocracy. His father's coat of arms is described thus in the record in the Heralds' College: "in a field of gold upon a bend sables a spear of the first, the point upward headed, argent." This coat of arms with the symbolic "point upward headed" was beyond question secured by Shakespeare, who was at the time a successful London man of the theater. It was registered in his father's name in order that the gentility of the family might receive as ancient

a date as possible. Shakespeare's imposing house at Stratford was thus acquired not merely by a gentleman, but by a gentleman of the second generation!

Shakespeare was not only a man on the up-grade. He was also the great declamatory voice of England on the up-grade, or, foreseeing the aftermath of 1607, of the English race on the up-grade. He was the voice of the newly vitalized people who broke the power of Spain, took eternal hold on North America, and produced the King James Version of the Bible. He could see kings or kingly characters in conflict; he could see the murder of a king; but he could not see the genius of tragedy stooping to a subject less than kingly. And the fashion set in the tragedies prevailed too with the necessary modifications in the comedies and the romances.

In the century from 1650 to 1750 the literature of England was still the literature of America. The great names are Milton, Dryden, and Pope.

Milton, the "God-gifted organ-voice of England," chose for the subject of his supreme epic, *Paradise Lost,* even the King of Heaven and His Son, the Archangels rebellious and loyal, and Adam and Eve, ancestor and ancestress of all the later kings of men.

Dryden's best remembered lyric is devoted to the world-conqueror, Alexander of Macedon. His best plays, *All for Love* and *Aureng-Zebe*, deal, the one with a Roman emperor and an Egyptian Queen, the other with the Mogul family which built the Taj Mahal. His most characteristic work, *Absalom and Achitophel,* has as its subject, thinly disguised as a king of Jerusalem, his own "sovereign lord," Charles II of England.

Like the author of *Paradise Lost*, Pope dared the greatest of themes. Profoundly different in temperament and in the age-spirit which was inevitably his, Pope who wrote

> Let us . . .
> Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,
> And catch the Manners living as they rise;

Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
But vindicate the ways of God to Man

stood nevertheless on the same high plane with Milton, who thus addressed the heavenly muse:

. . . what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men.

Even Pope's immortal mock epic, *The Rape of the Lock,* had no meaner scene than Hampton Court, the Renaissance palace where "great Anna," queen of England, did "sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tea."

Thus the literature of the English race in its first modern flowering was an upward-looking, aristocratic literature of the strong men of the world, the dukes, the generals, the kings, the emperors; at times a literature which portrayed the gods of Olympus and, humbly and boldly, the God of high Heaven. And the men of the time were performing heroic exploits. They

were making England the mistress of the world and, "westward the course of empire," they were planting on the shores of the North American continent the seeds of an even greater nation.

But a new phenomenon had appeared on the literary horizon, no larger than a man's hand in the case of Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (1696), but soon to dominate the scene after Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722). The quality of Captain Steele's *Tatler* and *Spectator* papers, his association and collaboration with the brilliant secretary of state, Joseph Addison, and the merit of the play itself made *The Conscious Lovers* a conspicuous example of a new literary movement. The innovation lay in Steele's contention, a daring one in 1722, that a rich, amiable, philanthropic city-dwelling merchant might be as worthy of respect as a landholding aristocrat. But let the admirable Mr. Sealand speak for himself:

"I know the town and the world: and give me leave to say, that we merchants are a species of gentry that have grown into the world this last century, and are as honorable and almost as useful, as you landed folks that have always thought yourselves so much above us; for your trading is extended no farther than a load of hay or a fat ox. You are pleasant people, indeed, because you are generally brought up to be lazy; therefore, I warrant you, industry is dishonorable."

The Conscious Lovers succeeded less well than Addison's *Cato* nine years earlier, with its lines on liberty which politicians of all shades of opinion felt it politic to applaud, less well than *The Beggar's Opera* six years later, helped on by music, by the loveliness of the actress, Lavinia Fenton, and by the presumed allusions to the prime minister, Robert Walpole, who was in personal habits a Tory and in politics a Whig. But *The Conscious Lovers* succeeded, and the reputable middle classes won the right to be taken seriously on the stage. With the

storming of that inner citadel, the theater, the whole field of literature was theirs, and the eighteenth century threw forth a new type of literature, the novel, to portray them.

Nor was the novel satisfied with the middle classes only. Servants had been handled sympathetically in *The Conscious Lovers*, but a servant wooed a servant. By 1740, however, a servant-girl in Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* married her employer. In Carl Holliday's words:

> What a furor it raised! Here was something new under the sun. Young, the author of the *Night Thoughts*, called him (Richardson) an instrument of Providence; preachers praised him from the pulpit; ladies hid themselves in the parks to get a glimpse of him. It is said on the authority of Sir John Herschel that when a blacksmith read the book to the village neighbors collected in his shop, and they found at the close that Pamela had married her master, they shouted in their happiness, forced the sexton to open the church door, and rang the bell for joy.

Triumphant sentiment wanted, however, still more worlds to win, and the poor as well as the middle classes were soon championed by worthy knights of the pen not only in prose but in poetry.

Following in the steps of Gray in the "Elegy Written in A Country Churchyard" and those of Goldsmith in "The Deserted Village," Burns went below the middle classes for subjects. The wholesome God-fearing family so happily portrayed in "The Cotter's Saturday Night" are poor country people. In a great figure of speech, symbolic of the centuries ahead, Burns, in "A Man's a Man for a' That," summed up his philosophy:

> The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
> The man's the gold for a' that.

In other words, Burns held that the gold of manhood exists independently of the trappings of titles or wealth. The value is there whether or not the gold has been stamped by the minter. The stamp of rank or wealth can not make

dross into gold. On the other hand, it just as surely can not make gold into dross.

But William Wordsworth went decidedly farther. Michael and the old leech-gatherer and many other characters are poor to the point of destitution. As portrayed by Wordsworth, however, they are noble, in part at least, because of their poverty. They appear as elemental human beings unspoiled by the superficialities of wealth and position, which tend to stifle the natural noble instincts and prevent the development of the higher virtues. The gold of Burns might show the imprint of the royal mint and still be gold. Wordsworth suspected that dross came in with the minting. And Wordsworth gave his name to the age.

By the middle of the century, a low born and a high born man in the same cheap novel were axiomatically in the former case the hero and in the latter case the villain. The cult that the poor were invariably worthy was summed up and gently satirized by W. S. Gilbert in the

operetta, *Iolanthe*. With Phyllis, the heroine, who cries that wealth and virtue are incompatible, the chorus of British peers remonstrates:

> "No, no, indeed; high rank will never hurt you:
> The peerage is not destitute of virtue."

In his song which follows, Lord Tolloller is even more explicit:

> "Spurn not the nobly born
> With love affected,
> Nor treat with virtuous scorn
> The well-connected.
> High rank involves no shame;
> We boast an equal claim
> With him of humble name
> To be respected."

By thus turning the clear light of satire on the literature of the period, the genial but ever wise Gilbert was instrumental in preparing British readers for a change destined to be initiated by Kipling. In America, however, Gilbert's popularity did not result in any appreciable literary influence.

In brief summary, then, sentimentalism arose and flourished under the sway of Classicism. It was a component part and, at its best, a noble part of Romanticism. With Wordsworth's poems of humble life in his *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and with his defense of his principles in the preface to the second edition (1800) of this work, it reached its pinnacle. The friends in *Bleak House* and Amelia in *Vanity Fair* bear witness to the fact that the major Victorian novelists, Dickens and Thackeray, were proud to stride under its banner. Tennyson was alike the product and the shaper of his age; with the astuteness of a literary Walpole he partly championed the movement by such poems as "Lady Clara Vere de Vere" and partly retarded it by his many poems with a subject-matter of nobles and kings. Literature in the true sense had meanwhile appeared in America, but its underlying philosophies were not different from those of the literature of England.

By 1890 or 1900 the time had come for a

change, for since 1798 no new movement of significance had shown itself in literature and the literary modes of the century were so conventionalized that the most interesting work was achieved in the field of light verse and light comedy by Dobson and Gilbert. In England, Kipling, who will give his name to the years 1892-1933, offered new themes and new attitudes, but the writers of America strangely refused to go with him to oil his big machines, subdue his savage tribesmen, and chant his racial imperialism. They even more strangely failed to see challenging subjects in America itself, a country great in resources, in idealism, in courage, and in achievement. The American writers—little men—clung timidly to the fruits of sentimentalism: fresh once, canned and standardized before the nineteenth century's end, rotten in the twentieth.

In a sentimentalism no longer humane but merely blind, many American authors turned their sympathy from the worthy poor to the

unworthy, or rather from poverty to unworthiness, for paupers or play-boys became equally the subjects of literature, so long as their characters were not normal. Sympathy went no longer to the hero—triumphant, or fallen; nor yet to the good merchant and his family so long denied a place in the social sun; nor even to the worthy and admirable poor, too long deprived of the necessities and decencies of life. Sympathy went to none of these, but to criminals and the mentally deranged. These wretched ones, the debris of every age, the writers of the twentieth century strangely undertook to make important and alluring.

The principle of decadent sentimentalism dominates the numerous, vociferous, and much overrated left-wing group among the new writers. The roll need not be called; it is called enough anyhow, for the chief oath of the brotherhood is that the members shall promote each other. But there are traces elsewhere. There is no decadent sentimentalism in the best

lyrics of Robert Frost, Robert Underwood Johnson, Edwin Markham, and Edwin Arlington Robinson, four poets elected in recent years to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. There is none in Booth Tarkington's *Alice Adams*, in Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, or in Rose Wilder Lane's *Let the Hurricane Roar*. Mrs. Wharton in *Ethan Frome* skims warily between true tragedy and decadent sentimentalism, but the scales tip in favor of the latter. Sinclair Lewis plays sentimentally with some rather common clay in *Babbitt*, but the sentimentalism is possibly not quite to be classed as decadent. Some of Willa Cather's books show contamination, but *Death Comes for the Archbishop* does not. Some of the leaders in non-fiction prose in the twentieth century have escaped decadent sentimentalism—among them Nicholas Murray Butler, who has spoken most frequently, most authoritatively, and most effectively for education, and William Lyon Phelps, the foremost of free lance

critics of literature. There is indeed enough current literature good under any standards for even the most assiduous reader, but the existence of this good literature does not abolish the menace of the decadent sentimentalists. There is not only the direct menace to gullible readers, but the contagion may spread even to writers of ability. Decadent sentimentalism has for instance touched in some degree in certain of their works such recognized writers as Eugene O'Neill, winner of the Nobel Prize, and Robert Frost, America's outstanding living poet.

O'Neill's attitude is usually sentimental. He feels for his characters intensely, even though, with regard to moral and mental respectability, many of his men and women live "across the tracks." Of some fifty plays, two, *The Emperor Jones* and *Diff'rent*, which have had as much general vogue as the others and have furthermore been widely used in anthologies, may serve as examples. In *The Emperor Jones*, O'Neill, with his "emperor," glances back by

way of Shakespeare and Marlowe to Sophocles, but it soon turns out that Brutus Jones is only a chain-gang ex-convict, and Smithers is obviously a low fellow even at the opening of the play. Again, in *Diff'rent* the middle class heroine becomes a psychopathic case, a hideous painted old hag who buys the attentions of a depraved young man with money and promises. The portrayal of such characters reflects the decadent sentimentalism of the age.

Frost, who deserves, more than Whitman ever did, the epithet the "good gray poet"; Frost, who could give the world such imperishable lyrics as "The Road Not Taken;" Frost, who could write "The Tuft of Flowers," "Mending Wall," and "Birches;" was he, too, touched with decadent sentimentalism? Yes, though very slightly. Wordsworth played with the subject of Betty Foy and her idiot boy, but Wordsworth would not have written "A Servant to Servants," that ghastly thing about the crazy man in the pen upstairs. Frost is not to be

classed as a decadent sentimentalist. He is less fond of the "satanic kink" in character than Robinson was, and Robinson is not a decadent sentimentalist when his whole output is considered. Frost is a great poet of humanity. His gray suit is spotless, but his good walking boots carry some mud-of-the-age picked up when he stole across the tracks for a brief glance at the blighted areas.

The situation may be summed up roughly in a generalization. Writers in English walked with kings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; they walked with the middle classes in the eighteenth. They walked with crowds in the nineteenth, but did not lose their virtue. In the twentieth century, the writers of the new America of a hundred million people might have under Kipling's leadership found new subjects in the factory, in mechanized transportation, or in national destiny, but too many of them had sniffed the smells of decaying morals and minds —and across the tracks they scrambled to initi-

ate a period characterized by decadent sentimentalism. They turned away from those great facts of human achievement which will determine the future glory of the early twentieth century; they turned away from the ninety-eight per cent of worthy Americans; they gloated on the reprehensible and unfortunate two per cent who come as a curse to every period and concern lawmakers, jailers, executioners, and perhaps physicians, but certainly should not concern writers.

The decadent authors partly led and partly were pushed along by women newly enfranchised or about to be enfranchised. Flowers for prisoners; mawkish tears for murderers about to receive—rarely enough, God knows—their just deserts; lewd vicarious interest in the stories of strange crimes and abnormal criminals; these characterized the early years of the period following the World War. And writers, abusing and threatening the freedom of the press, arose to profit from the depraved taste of the

literate but easily beguiled American woman, and (in so far as he read at all) of her husband or brother, who took his books casually as he watched the pre-1929 rising of prices on the New York Stock Exchange.

To repeat, the development of this school of decadent sentimentalists was logical. In a straight line literature moved across the whole field of human life from the head of the state to the inmate of the jail or the asylum.

But a change is now just as logical, for that straight line can be drawn no farther; it has reached the bottom of the mire.

And a change is of vital importance to the Christian religion, to Anglo-Saxon ideals, and to the American nation. "Tell me thy company, and I'll tell thee what thou art," said Don Quixote in Cervantes's great mock epic so instrumental in initiating the modern world; and the same thought has been voiced by many a writer in English. The Don's words certainly apply to the company one meets in books as

well as to the company one meets in person. In fact the environment of bad company in life is likely to be so nauseating as to prevent any evil influence. In books, however, the hideous features of a bad environment will be obscured by the subversive purpose of a decadent author.

If that portion of the modern American world which is Christian, decent, and patriotic is, then, to save itself, its children, and its ideals, it must come to grips at once with decadent sentimentalism, whether this sentimentalism manifests itself in the tolerating and coddling of criminals, or in producing a body of art and literature which seeks to undermine the ideals of the race.

CHAPTER II

Propaganda in the Terminology of Literary Criticism

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HUMAN intercourse is made possible by the speech sounds of a language, but these sounds combined and uttered as words often convey different impressions to different hearers. The underlying idea associated with a word is the same, but the connotation depends on the experience of the one who uses the word. Hot and cold, long and short, easy and hard are examples of words which retain their fundamental meaning yet vary in degree according to the experience of the user. Within a given period of a language, the most striking variations are between meaning as sensed by a child and meaning as sensed by an adult. To a child, a "lot of money" may mean fifty cents, or a problem in subtraction may be "hard." Even among adults, meaning has similar though less

wide variations, depending on a person's time, place, knowledge, occupation, and experience. A long journey on foot might mean three miles to an elderly retired man or thirty to a lieutenant of infantry. Temperance at first meant a pledge to limit the daily intake of hard liquor to a quart; later it meant total abstinence. The terms iris and gladiolus have taken on new meanings with the innovations of the hybridizers. Instances are legion and are interesting enough, though this is not the place for them.

Variation in possible meaning is characteristic of poetry. When one says in the poetry of prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," one thinks of the twentieth century needs of his family, his friends, and the world, though the thought was voiced nearly 2,000 years ago and received its present form by 1611. When a lover sings Burns's

O, my luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:

O, my luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly played in tune

he is not thinking, as Burns did, of a Scottish lass contemporary with George III and George Washington. He is thinking of a woman he himself knows and loves. When Wordsworth wrote of "battles long ago," he could not have had in mind Gettysburg, which was unfought and unthought of in 1804, but an American school child may with perfect propriety think of Gettysburg when he reads Wordsworth's lines:

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.

Such subjective adaptability of a phrase or a sentence or a whole lyric is a part of the glory of poetry. It belongs also to lofty prose. Intended or unintended, it is frequent also in workaday prose, and presents something of a problem when prose is, or should be, trying to

achieve exact statement. A few illustrations may be mentioned from a large list confronted daily. Liberty, decency, and culture are terms important in human society and on the broad general meaning of each of them there would be little disagreement; yet few individuals have identical conceptions of every shade of meaning connoted by any one of these terms. The important political names Republican and Democrat are likewise somewhat unprecise. The former means scarcely the same thing in Vermont and North Dakota, and the latter has different meanings in Virginia and Massachusetts.

In no other field, however, has the lack of precision in terminology been more marked than in literature. Even such important and commonly used terms as *Renaissance*, *classicism*, *romanticism*, *nature*, and the term *literature* itself have several meanings or connotations.

The two centuries from 1450 to 1650 are commonly referred to as the Renaissance. The

work of recent scholars has driven out the ancient and temporarily justified term, "the Dark Ages," and everyone knows now that many minds were alert and many restless men including Leif Ericson and Marco Polo were abroad on the waves and on the world's land ways before Gutenberg made his movable type about 1450 and before Columbus touched upon Watling Island in 1492. Nevertheless the second half of the fifteenth century and the century and a half thereafter did show a marked increase in curiosity with regard to the great monuments of the past, and with regard to unknown and far-off places. The same years showed innovations in religion and government; moreover, men's findings and men's ideas were scattered widely through the new medium of print. Thus in the aggregate there was certainly an amount of newly stimulated zeal for knowledge, exploration, and experiment which may well be called a birth of intellectual energy or, in compliment to the great

centuries from 200 B.C. to 200 A.D., a rebirth, and the term *Renaissance* is apt as well as convenient.

In like manner, the term *classicism* very happily characterizes the century which centers around the golden decade 1702-1712 in England. The literature of the old classical periods of Greece and Rome was studied and admired far more than the literature of England's own early days, the significance of the unique manuscript of the great native epic *Beowulf* being still unknown. Dryden, the outstanding writer of the years 1670-1700, translated the *Aeneid*, the *Georgics*, and the *Bucolics* of Vergil, the greatest poet of Rome. Pope, the outstanding writer of the years 1700-1744, translated or was responsible for the translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer, the greatest poet of Greece. The most characteristic types of literature, the critical doctrine, even the very color of the literary vocabulary of the ages of Dryden and Pope were also Greek or Roman. The clas-

sical influence was also shown in architecture and the other arts. The period is happily called the age of Classicism, and no harm is caused by the kindred though different uses of the term *classic* for a work produced in ancient Greece or Rome and for a work of superior excellence produced in any period.

Scarcely less apt is the term *romanticism* as applied to the years from the fall of the Bastille in 1789 to the death of Sir Walter Scott in 1832 or alternatively to the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne of England in 1837. This period was rich in mechanical invention, political changes, lyric poetry, and prose fiction. There was a widespread interest in political liberalism, humble life, nature, far-off places, and the past. All of these subjects suggest a change from the formality of the classical period, and in most of them there are features that can well be called romantic, even in the everyday use of the word. The term romanticism, then, even though it is elastic

enough to stretch over the lyricism of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," the medieval pageantry of Scott's *Ivanhoe*, and the political liberalism of Wordsworth's early sonnets, is nevertheless the most appropriate designation for the period.

The meaning of *nature* may vary from period to period. *Nature* was the idol of Pope:

> First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
> By her just standard, which is still the same;
> Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
> One clear, unchanged, and universal light,
> Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
> At once the source, and end, and test of Art.

It was also beloved of Wordsworth:

> Come forth into the light of things,
> Let Nature be your teacher . . . .
> One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can.

But these great men were clear-minded enough to know the looseness of the term and were

honest enough to fill out the picture. Such further helps as Pope's word "methodized" and Wordsworth's statement that

> Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her

enable us in these instances to understand precisely, even though the term has markedly different connotations.

The term *literature* itself is loosely used for anything in print, "travel literature" for instance referring to circulars advertising transportation facilities and places of recreation and entertainment. It is also used as a term connoting excellence and delimiting distinguished creative or imaginative writing from undistinguished work of the same type. "This writer's books," one may hear, "are interesting but they never rise to the level of literature." The word is again used collectively to refer to a body of writing bound loosely by a common chronology or nationality, as in "the literature of the 18th century" or "English literature."

To sum up, there are—dependent on a speaker's or hearer's experience and upon the tradition of long use—admitted variations in the connotation of ordinary words and of critical terms. The several possible meanings of everyday words and of such critical terms as *Renaissance, classicism, romanticism, nature,* and *literature* may tend to prevent mathematical precision in carrying meaning from speaker to hearer or from writer to reader. From those varying connotations, occasional slight confusion may perhaps result, but certainly not harm, for in all cases the underlying meanings of the several connotations are identical or kin.

The real sin in terminology is found elsewhere. In recent years the vocabulary of criticism has received as recruits several terms which—far from being merely in a slight degree unprecise—have in fact no necessary relation whatever to the everyday words on which they are based. Such terms belong more to propaganda than to criticism.

The term propaganda is new in the vocabulary of the average Englishman and the average American, but the practice described by the term is older than the English race. Examples could be drawn from the ancient world, but none before or since is more striking than the doctrine that the Norman Conquest was a good thing for England—a doctrine spread so zealously by the descendants of the conquerors that it was not until the twentieth century that scholars like Sir Charles Oman established, with the help of archaeology, the true nature of the Conquest. We know now that the Norman Conquest was a tragedy for the English race for eight or ten generations—that is, from the fall of Harold stricken by the fatal arrow in 1066 to King John's loss of Normandy in 1204. We know further that with no reference to any race or nation it gave a severe setback to civilization in Europe.

Old, however, as propaganda is, it did not become a grave menace in literary criticism until

the nineteenth century. As that century wore toward its close, a group of critics intrinsically corrupt or desirous of corrupting Western morals, or both, began to weave propaganda into the critical vocabulary. Their outstanding sins have had to do with the use of the terms *realism* and *naturalism*.

These terms, *realism* and *naturalism*, have of late years been applied to the typical writings of certain authors whose backgrounds or tastes have led them to portray the lives of persons whose outstanding traits are criminal or degenerate. Thus Zola, with his fondness for the manifestations of decadence, is hailed as the first great naturalistic novelist of the modern world, and Theodore Dreiser, whose "American" tragedy concerns a man's murder of one woman in order that he may marry another, is hailed by his admirers as the great American "realist." Dreiser has even been suggested for the Nobel prize—and will probably receive it, if the Swedish committee decides on another sarcastic compliment to American "idealism."

But the question under discussion is not the merit or lack of merit in the writings of Zola, Dreiser, et al. The question is whether the writings of these men and the little fellows who follow them should be called *realistic* and *naturalistic*. There is only one answer: the terms *realistic* and *naturalistic* should not be used in this way. The terms are allied respectively to *real*, and to *reality*; to *nature*, and to *natural*. Their use is thus propaganda rather than criticism. A critic who wants a certain type of life to be considered real calls it realism. A critic who wants a certain type of conduct to be considered natural calls it naturalistic. The very coinage and continued circulation of these words are for the most part designed to deceive and influence the unwary.

As far back as 1906, the Congress of the United States decided that a false label could no longer with impunity be placed upon foul and poisonous meat. But no law—even as the half-century nears its end—prevents the fine labels *realism* and *naturalism* from being placed

on any literary product, however foul or poisonous it may be. And these labels really deceive the public, particularly the gullible sophomoric young. An ignorant or unwarned person hearing or reading the term realism—to choose the more frequently used of the two terms—naturally takes it at its face value, as defined, for instance, by a widely used dictionary, the Merriam *Webster's Collegiate*, fifth edition:

> Realism . . . In art and literature, fidelity to nature or to real life.

What is real life? The typical novel describing life in the Old South during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods has often been described as "romantic"—the term being used as the antithesis of "realistic." But the Virginia captains and colonels painted by the novelists of 1865-1890 were not romantic portraits. These men were typical of a class. With them a chivalrous attentiveness to ladies, ardent valor in battle, and a haughty dignity even in poverty were as real as the sea is to an Englishman

brought up in a seaport town. The real confederate General J. E. B. Stuart, as well as Captain Thomasson's portrait, wore a "love-knot on his shoulder and spurs of gold." Stuart's father-in-law was a general in the Union army and the two men faced each other in battle more than once in Northern Virginia. The novelist John Esten Cooke, a Captain on Stuart's staff, would, on his scouting forays, actually wait by a friendly farmhouse until a Federal squad was within two hundred yards of him before tossing down his coffee and galloping away. Cooke fought against his uncle, the same federal general, Philip St. George Cooke, who was Stuart's father-in-law. These things are facts—yet they are laughed at as "romantic." Indeed almost all the things hostile critics assail as romantic were as real to these Southerners as the ways of the criminal and the insane are to the modern writers of the school of decadent sentimentalism.

That a man should in the sincerity of ex-

perience call the subjects of decadent sentimentalism real or natural is, whether he realizes it or not, his personal tragedy. It is also his autobiography. But the reading world must be made to know that to some men and women, including some who have written since 1890, loyalty, integrity, and honor are real—as real as the ways of the criminals, the insane, and the degenerate are to others. And the subjective terms realism and naturalism are to be cleared forthwith from our critical vocabulary —unless that vocabulary is to sink to the level of deceptive and dangerous propaganda.

CHAPTER III

The Revolt Against the Didactic

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THE early decades of the twentieth century saw the outbreak of a determined revolt against didactic literature. The chief intended victims of the assaulters were the New England poets, Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, and also William Cullen Bryant, and the English laureate Tennyson, but the principles of the attackers were often stated in general terms. Literature was repeatedly said to have no concern with character or conduct. Ridicule was heaped upon such passages as Longfellow's

> Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime
> And departing leave behind us
> Footprints on the sands of time

or Bryant's

> So live, that when thy summons comes to join
> The innumerable caravan which moves

To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Tennyson's popularity and his morals together caused him to be assailed for thoughts such as the following:

Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

The attack had at least three distinct motivations—jealousy, propaganda against Anglo-Saxon ethical standards, and certain specious assumptions easily shown to be without basis in reason or fact.

There are few things in literature more amazing or more sinister than the extremes to which jealousy has driven many left-wing writers.

Didactic literature has always enjoyed popularity with English-speaking peoples and the spite of the jealous was in consequence directed with especial fury against didacticism. The anti-didactic writers, offering their own wares as substitutes, attacked not only the New England school and the Victorians, but such undecadent twentieth century writers as Alfred Noyes, Thornton Wilder, and Rudyard Kipling.

With no reference to his merits, Alfred Noyes was belittled simply because as a skillful didactic poet he had many readers and because his personal tastes and the duties of his career kept him from foregathering with the emerging leftists of the World War years.

After the great success of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and before the winning of the Pulitzer Prize by *Our Town*, Thornton Wilder was the victim of an unsuccessful attack based on nothing except envy.

But the outstanding example is Kipling. Reviewing the *Inclusive Edition* of the poetry of

this great genius, Brander Matthews, Professor of Dramatic Literature in Columbia University, suggested the thought that it contained a body of poetry comparable in value with the combined outputs of all other poets—British and American—during the same years, 1885-1918. Even if Professor Matthews's suggestion is dismissed without consideration, the truth remains that, whether the yardstick be financial success, frequent quotation, or approval of independent critics, Kipling towered above any one contemporary. He was the beloved voice of his empire, imperial Britain, in the great years, 1890 to 1919. Writing was his only business. His work was worth money and he asked money for the use of it in anthologies. But many anthologists could not pay the price, and Kipling was left out. To justify his absence, they denied him any merit whatsoever as a poet. And the chorus of left-wing critics chirped in harmony with the anthologists.

But the stabs of the attackers glanced off

the iron shield of true merit. For all the exhorting of his henchmen, no left-wing poet or novelist superseded Noyes, Wilder, or Kipling, and the least of the three stands above the tallest of those who condemned him as didactic.

Of peculiar origin is the underlying cause of the revolt against didacticism as exemplified specifically in the attack on Anglo-Saxon or Western ethical standards. The attack certainly cannot by any means be blamed wholly on the alien elements in our population, for the subversive groups contain members of Anglo-Saxon lineage and even of old American stock. The attack is due partly to Anglo-Saxon Americans of low character trying to reach their ends—political, financial, or literary—by selling their birthright for the support of an alien minority.

That alien elements, whether directly or indirectly, are responsible for the belittling of the American tradition and Anglo-Saxon morals, is a result of the position and the power of New York City. Because it is a great seaport, this

city received most of the horde of aliens who poured in so fast in the years following 1900 that, from that year to 1940, at least one unassimilable but aggressive minority group increased its United States numbers by 350%. Unfortunately, however, immigrants in the twentieth century were different from those of the nineteenth. They did not wish manual labor on a prairie farm or in a Pennsylvania mine. They determined to achieve their ends without manual labor.

For such a group, New York City was the promised land. First and foremost, by a curious and happy chance the State of New York was so evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans that the support of any one minority group in the great city might well swing the electoral votes of the most populous state—and a presidential election. Is it to be wondered at, then, that politicians in both major parties became sentimentally solicitous about the wishes of the new voters of New York—aliens with no

traditional political allegiance—and became neglectful of the wishes or even the rights of voters elsewhere whose political anchorage was fixed, and whose states were neither doubtful nor had many electoral votes? Secondly, New York dominated the nation financially and the aliens who became allied with the great commercial institutions wielded an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. Finally, New York was the center of the nation's publishing business and the alien newcomers soon won in this important field enough power to be catered to by writers who wished critical approval at any price. Between their electoral importance, their financial power, and their influence through the press these aliens soon came to wield, directly or indirectly, a major influence in American affairs. To assure a continuance of this influence they fostered, in most cases perhaps through their venal Anglo-Saxon friends, the idea that Anglo-Saxon ethical standards and didactic ways of thought were outmoded and

absurd. With the usual complacence of numbers, the Anglo-Saxon majority (unlike the alien minorities) has no official propaganda group, and in a short time was attacked and belittled with no effective means of defense. Its didactic thinking was said to be wrong. Its preachers, politicians, and business men were represented as absurd if not wicked. In Hollywood, which is closely allied with New York, the villain of almost every motion picture was, for instance, an Anglo-Saxon, until Germans began to be added to the list of villains as the 1930's wore on toward the 1940's. A loathsome play, *Tobacco Road,* goes on year after year in New York because it portrays a group of Anglo-Saxon Americans as degenerate scoundrels with a disgusting religion—all to the intense delight of New Yorkers, who are neither Anglo-Saxons nor Christians, and, of course, to the equal delight of some of the viler Anglo-Saxons.

At the dawn of the fifth decade of the cen-

tury, the Anglo-Saxon American is still turning the other cheek and the aliens are becoming bolder and more aggressive. Will the Anglo-Saxon accept intellectual and moral serfdom or will he reassert himself with the vigor which he displayed in the nineteenth century? The answer should be forthcoming by 1950.

The assault on Anglo-Saxon didacticism was, when stripped of its camouflage of verbiage, found to be based on several false assumptions: (a) that those who endorse didactic poetry endorse all didactic poetry, and that all didactic poetry is poor in quality; (b) that non-didactic poetry is very likely to be good; and (c) that great poetry is concerned with art alone and has nothing to do with morals.

With respect to the first of these points, no defender of the didactic maintains that all purpose poetry is good. The merits of a soup or a shaving cream may be heralded across the nation in sentences which have rime and meter, but the exhortations to buy or to try are not

poetry and no one claims that they are poetry. Poor prose and poor poetry may, of course, be produced by persons who take up great themes and handle them with no aptitude and no training. But prose and poetry equally poor are produced by those who with similar lack of ability take up evil or subversive themes. Not all didactic poetry is good, but that critic would be reckless and scornful of fact who would maintain that English didactic poetry lacks greatness whether produced twelve centuries ago by the unknown author of *Beowulf* or within the present century by Rudyard Kipling. Indeed by the test of pages filled in Christopher Morley's new edition of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, Kipling, who occupies many times as much space as his nearest rival, is something of the overtowering poet Professor Matthews said he was. And this pre-eminence results in large measure from his didacticism.

With respect to the second point, a non-didactic poem is not more likely to be great

than a didactic poem but it is perhaps more likely to be passable. A didactic poem at once invites comparison with the great utterances of the great minds of the race. A wholly non-didactic poem, on the contrary, is likely to be a small order at best and it may fulfill its slight function of imagery or narration, without being important enough to excite an unfavorable comparison.

The two assumptions hitherto discussed and classed as false are so patently false that they can hardly deceive an intelligent person, and the would-be critics may be forgiven. The third assumption is a more subtle sin against reason, and for it they must be called to judgment.

The implication, assumption, or statement that great poetry has not always been didactic is so false that the perpetrator of such a view is dangerous either for his ignorance or for his intended subversion.

All great poets who have spoken of the function of poetry have shouted forth the poet's duty

to champion the "hate of hate" and the "love of love" or other moral truths he is interested in. Keats stated that poetry should "lift the thoughts of man." Shelley described poets as the "trumpeters that sing to battle" and as "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." This same essential didacticism is found in the great old poets and in the great recent poets as well. From *Beowulf* to the present day the masterpieces are all didactic.

Beowulf is a mirror for conduct; its goal is to give instruction in decorum. How a queen should and should not conduct herself; how a king should behave in bravery and in generosity; above all, how a young warrior should deport himself in such routine duties as doffing armor or stacking spears and in such life-principles as loyalty and battle valor: these are all taught in the great epic of our early ancestors. *Beowulf* might indeed have as its subtitle "a mirror of conduct."

The same words—with a shift of ideals to

chivalry, knighthood, and organized Christianity, to Boethian philosophy and courtly love—apply to the best writing in medieval literature. Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, the greatest poem between *Beowulf* and the *Fairy Queen*, is a mirror of conduct. And the runner-up for poetic greatness in the period, the *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, is wholly and avowedly didactic.

In *The Fairy Queen*, Spenser proudly announces his didacticism. Before one reads a canto or a stanza of the first Book, one has been confronted by the epistle dedicatory to Sir Walter Raleigh of England, Ireland, and North Carolina. "The general end, therefore," says Spenser, "is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." Spenser admits that some "had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large," but sticks to his allegory because: "So much more profitable and gratious is doctrine by ensample than by rule."

Shakespeare teaches many a moral lesson—

among others that the wages of sin is Death. But Shakespeare was not satisfied with teaching "by ensample." In *Hamlet* as in other plays the basic principles of human conduct were shouted forth in the form of sententious precepts by the rhetorical actors of the time:

> This above all: to thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.

> Assume a virtue, if you have it not. . . .
> Refrain to-night,
> And that shall lend a kind of easiness
> To the next abstinence; the next more easy;
> For use almost can change the stamp of nature.

Milton's great epic, *Paradise Lost,* was designed to teach the ways of God to men and to make men accept these ways. This didactic purpose is not only evident throughout the epic, but is explicitly stated in the already quoted lines from the sweeping, sonorous, majestic organ peal with which the poem opens. The

author's didactic intention is further shown in numerous sententious and hortatory passages. The English race has never tired of quoting such maxims as the two which follow:

> That which before us lies in daily life
> Is the prime wisdom.

> Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou liv'st
> Live well; how long or short permit to Heaven.

Pope was essentially didactic. His *Essay on Man* in its four epistles stated what Pope believed to be true of man's relations to God, himself, society, and happiness. Pope's range of didacticism was great. He could advise a reader on the acceptance of Destiny—and also in regard to costume or vocabulary:

> Submit.—In this, or any other sphere,
> Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear:
> Safe in the hand of one disposing Power,
> Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
> All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
> All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;

All Discord, Harmony not understood;
All partial Evil, universal Good.

In words as fashions the same rule will hold;
Alike fantastic if too new or old;
Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

As one approaches modern times, those poets who are incontestably great have their didactic messages. Wordsworth cried out with democratic fervor the doctrine expressed in the lines

We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.

Tennyson gave such great lines and such great truths as

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.

Known to all readers of poetry are Browning's

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp
Or what's a heaven for?

and

> God's in his heaven—
> All's right with the world!

The greater modern poets continue the didactic tradition of their immortal predecessors. This is true on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the British Isles, there has been less anti-didactic talk than in America, and the essentially didactic poet Kipling has been popular since the beginning of the century. Even Thomas Hardy was, upon occasion, explicitly didactic:

> Whence comes solace? Not from seeing,
> What is doing, suffering, being;
> Not from noting Life's conditions,
> Not from heeding Time's monitions;
> But in cleaving to the Dream
> And in gazing at the Gleam
> Whereby gray things golden seem.

Yeats's "Ballad of Father Gilligan" teaches at once the majesty of prayer and the mercy of God. His characters in his best play, *The Land of Hearts' Desire,* are happy to

. . . find the excellent old way through love
And through the care of children to the hour
For bidding Fate and Time and Change goodbye.

The poet laureate, Masefield, gives in four lines a fine philosophy of life:

Laugh and be merry, remember, better the world
with a song,
Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong.
Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the length of a
span.
Laugh and be proud to belong to the old proud
pageant of man.

Didactic also are the greater Americans. In a short poem "To Reformers in Despair," Vachel Lindsay cried:

'Tis not too late to build our land aright.

In a sonnet—and of the sonnet form he was master—Edwin Arlington Robinson wrote:

Look at a branch, a bird, a child, a rose,
Or anything God ever made that grows,—
Nor let the smallest vision of it slip,
Till you may read, as on Belshazzar's wall,
The glory of eternal partnership.

In his didacticism, Robert Frost can be as practical as Pope. Witness this homely but sane advice from "Build Soil":

> Don't join too many gangs. Join few if any.
> Join the United States and join the family—
> But not much in between unless a college.

In truth every worthy poet thinks of himself in the terms of Masefield's "young knight" who rushes in to rally "the broken squadron" of the world.

And is this viewpoint not natural? Does not the ambitious young man know the ardors imposed by the lofty calling of poetry? Could he undertake it earnestly for the mere desire of turning a neat phrase, or painting a word picture by impression or suggestion? A man who would turn from farming, railroading, medicine, or merchandising for such a life-work would be less than a man. No, the only poet worthy of the name is a man with a compelling message, a message that demands to be told, and such a poet is didactic, directly or indirectly according to his subjects and his methods.

Whether one considers the great writers of the past or the great writers of the present, only one conclusion is thus possible. Great poetry is essentially and inevitably didactic. There is no conflict between art and didacticism. In the masterpieces which have been cited, the art exists to make the didacticism effective. A person who declaims against didacticism is either a fool or a subversive rascal attempting to debase the thinking of readers of English.

CHAPTER IV

The Tottering Block House of Culture

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WHO has not watched a child build a house of blocks? And who has not seen the structure fall when more and more blocks were thoughtlessly added? The added blocks may, all of them, be pretty, but their effect on the whole structure is detrimental.

In this simple everyday incident lies a parable for those interested in the purveying or in the preservation of culture. Is it not true that no man or woman can play a respectable part in the work of the world, whether in business, profession, labor, or the home; can take the minimum of out-door exercise required for health; and can at the same time acquire even the thinnest, most transparent veneer of culture as it is offered today by its various vociferous promoters?

Let architecture, music, painting, and sculpture be ruled out, and let a rapidly taken census include only the "classics" written in English. Here alone, the amount enthusiastically offered by vociferous promoters is so appalling as to turn back any save the most intrepid adventurer. A study of a number of carefully compiled anthologies shows that there are more than three hundred writers in English generally deemed important enough to have a place in the assimilated culture of a well-read American. This list of three hundred, it must not be forgotten, excludes the architects, musicians, painters, and sculptors. It excludes the sovereigns, statesmen, scientists, and men of affairs whose work was such that it must be known for a proper understanding of literature. It excludes also foreign authors so influential on English and American writers that some knowledge of their work is necessary to understanding important classics in English. It excludes promising young writers of today in whose work a reader might well be interested.

But the anthologies referred to are not exceptional; they are typical of the inclusive anthology. And the textbooks on literature conform. The admirable history of English literature by John Buchan—good novelist and, as Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor-General of Canada—contains more than 3000 authors and titles deemed sufficiently worthy to be listed in the index to the volume.

The truth is that for half a century critics, academic and literary, have been adding names to the roster of culture according to the hobby or the specialty or the faith of the critic, with no regard for culture as a unit, national or otherwise, and with no regard to changes wrought by the passing of the years.

As Henry Adams pointed out in his *Education*, change in human events can be best gauged by fixing two points in time and then studying the straight line determined by them. In the present instance, let the two points in time be 1907 and 1940—two years a third of a century apart.

In 1907 an American to have a minimum of culture was supposed to know books and their authors to a number which may here be recorded by the algebraic symbol x. In 1940 he is supposed to know all of x. He is also supposed to know many old books and plays which were not read in 1907 but have been resurrected by the recent effort of specialists. Such works will for convenience be designated by y. He is finally supposed to know the good literature, British and American, produced during the thirty-three years which are under consideration. Let this new literature be referred to as z.

In other words an aspirant for culture in 1907 had to read x, whereas his or her son or daughter in 1940 has to read $x + y + z$.

The 1940 formula $x + y + z$ would be frightening, even if there were no complications. But the world has changed to a degree stunning to those who remember '07, and unrealizable to those born since. The automobile with its monopoly of time was hardly a factor

in 1907; in most parts of the country it was, in so far as it was known at all, a rattling chain-driven curiosity. Radio broadcasting was unknown. And motion pictures were not yet being offered to the general American public.

The 1940 aspirant for culture is forced then to pursue his $x + y + z$ in an environment filled with distractions undreamed of by his predecessor, who was kept amply busy with x three and thirty years before. But these distractions are not to be condemned; they are a part of the modern world and they have a cultural value. The motor may increase patriotism and national culture by affording cheap travel to such places as Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Valley Forge, and Gettysburg, to name three in but a single state, Pennsylvania. The radio has programs no one can afford to miss. To the living room of a laborer it brings the personal message of a president, the visit of royalty, or the cementing bond of common participation in a sports contest of national interest.

The talking picture, despite its propaganda, is a valuable factor in education and instruction in the middle third of the century. The ways of the modern world are certainly not to be condemned—they are to be controlled and enjoyed.

But whatever the value of the advantages afforded by a century in which engineering has made such triumphs, the present situation with its multitude of "classics" and its many distractions is, in one most serious way, highly perilous. It is threatening the existence of genuine literary culture.

Patently unable to approach the minimum of reading required for being "cultured," the erstwhile reader first pretends and then develops indifference to good books as he turns to bridge or some other unfortunate hobby. The old affectation of *"nil admirari"*—"to admire nothing"—comes back with a vengeance. One doesn't admire—or wonder at—the classics of the race; one doesn't even scorn them. Worst of all, one is unaware of them.

Who has not heard two lovers of books attempt a conversation upon their recent adventures in reading? One tells with enthusiasm of his ranging through the centuries, his going at last through the sixteen hundred pages of *Tom Jones*, his actual reading of Scott's *Waverley*, his delight in the historical novels of Harrison Ainsworth, his discovery of the poems of O'Shaughnessy, his satisfaction with the rural novels of Rose Wilder Lane and Gladys Hasty Carroll. The other tells of his joy in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, of his actually reading that old best-seller, Macaulay's *History of England*, of a reperusal of Newman's *Idea of a University*, of the humane wisdom found in the collected poems of Austin Dobson, of a similarity shown by Wells's *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* and Galsworthy's *The Patrician*. Both of these readers have chosen wisely, but they find no common point of contact and the conversation soon dwindles to a sub-culture level.

Now a nation needs the stimulus and the

unity which are fostered by a common culture. And culture flourishes best if all people know the same masterpieces—if a speaker's reference to a great character in fiction or to lines from a great poem stirs a remembering glow in the listener's mind. Literary culture demands that the hearer understand when one refers to *Beowulf*, *Macbeth*, or *Tam O'Shanter*, that all the adult partners to a talk know such lines as Milton's:

> Virtue could see to do what virtue would
> By her own radiant light though sun and moon
> Were in the flat sea sunk . . .

or Tennyson's:

> Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
> These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

The present ignorance of the finest expressions of the finest thought of the race is then perilous. But what is to be done?

A solution of the problem is to be found only in a drastic reduction of supposedly important literature—literature which a cultured person

is presumed to have read. Let us then look again at our formula $x + y + z$, with the idea of subtracting from it.

First and foremost, z must be retained. In the welter of books produced by writers living or recently dead, it is, of course, hard to make a certain choice; impossible to make one that will be undisputed. Friendship for particular authors, adherence to certain schools of propaganda, honest divergences of taste enter in to such a degree that Brander Matthews was partly right in his widely quoted statement that the appraisal of one's contemporaries is not criticism but conversation.

But, hard as it is, the task must be resolutely faced. In the haystacks of poems, plays, novels, and what not produced in the last fifty years, the good steel needles, the worthy books, must be found. In the search, the rotten hay, books contaminated by decadent sentimentalism, must be destroyed. The hay that is merely not the best will do no harm unless it is offered as the

best. Any label should be correct—for the information of the public. There is a hint for critics in a recent suggestion by an official of the American Rose Society that nurserymen offer the public no more new varieties of roses unless the new ones are actually better in some way than those already on the market. Critics should hail worthy new writers, and should welcome heartily even the promise of future greatness. But they owe their first debt to their readers and should beware of placing superlative adjectives on work which cannot stand comparison with existing works of the same scope and theme.

The task of discovering and popularizing the best work of his time is the primary duty of a critic. A book is at its best when it is new. A work of literary art can to no future generation mean as much as to the sympathetic contemporaries of its author. Holding the "mirror to nature" is more valuable when nature is contemporary. As much as a twentieth century

reader reveres the greatness of *Hamlet*, he must know that it means less to him than to the man of three centuries ago for whom its poetry was as good as it is now but to whom ghosts, revenge, and the intrigues within a royal house were lively topics of the day. Likewise, *Paradise Lost,* with its lofty study of the relations of man to woman and of the twain to God, remains the chief monument of our literature; but it meant even more to its own seventeenth century readers for whom no footnotes were needed on scientific passages and on the detailed allusions to ancient classical mythology. Surely it would have been tragic for the best minds of the seventeenth century to have missed the new works, *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost.* It would likewise be tragic for a reader today to be oblivious of the best thought of his contemporaries.

Is it possible to pick out with reasonable confidence in the success of the task some indisputably good books by writers still living or but recently dead? Agreement on a score or more

of works from England and a score or more from America as the absolute best might be impossible, for no one critic could conceivably be well informed on even a small part of the hundreds of books which are produced each week by the presses of England and America. The winnowing of time will have to take place before a final appraisal can be made upon the books of the early twentieth century. Lists of contemporary books are thus useful only if their makers offer the books with no statement explicit or hinted that all books on the list are better than all those that are not included. With this understanding a somewhat random list of good recent books may be useful. Shaw's *Arms and the Man* and *Major Barbara;* Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows*, *Dear Brutus, The Admirable Crichton,* and *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan;* the lyrics of William Butler Yeats; a substantial body of the prose and poetry of Kipling; the timeless plays and stories of Lord Dunsany; the Father Brown stories and some

of the poems of G. K. Chesterton; the youthful, humorous books of P. G. Wodehouse; Galsworthy's *The Patrician*; something from Milne, De La Mare, and the poet laureate, Masefield—are not these obligatory from Britain—and might not the list be easily extended? From America too, must not one beyond question read many of the poems of Frost and Robinson, Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Rölvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, a few plays by George Kelly, the public addresses of Nicholas Murray Butler, the stimulating and independent criticism of William Lyon Phelps, and—finally—a few works by the Nobelmen, Lewis and O'Neill, if only to make up one's mind whether the laurel wreaths on their "idealism" are European jibes at America?

Yes—and more, too!

In our formula $x + y + z$, we must then conserve z, limiting it to the best, according to the worthiest judgment we can find to follow.

With *y*, the problem is easier. The old works of literature—dead in 1907 and dug up since with a teapot tempest of rediscovery and re-popularization by some specialist—should all be relegated to the oblivion whence they were rescued. With them should go all authors who are kept anemically alive by small-fry critics and college professors who admire peculiarities rather than worth in the writings of the past. Minor poets of the twentieth century have at least the merit of contemporaneity and may fill the needs of certain readers better than the sometimes more difficult work of abler writers. Minor poets of the past are of no concern to the general reader. Turn a deaf ear when anyone cries out the rediscovery of an old poet less worthy than his fellows or his successors. Let the scholars have him, let the hobbymen have him, but do not pretend that a knowledge of him is essential to the possession of American culture. From the $x + y + z$ formula, y is then to be completely excluded—unless, of course,

there is a truly great discovery such as that of *Beowulf* in the nineteenth century.

With *x* comes the important problem. The goal is to have English-speaking people read and receive strength and guidance and joy from the great classics of the race. The value lies not only in possession, but in common possession. But the likelihood of people knowing the same masterpieces is lessened if the supposed body of common culture classics is too large to be read. In fact, as stated above, the likelihood of knowing any masterpieces, much less the same ones, is decidedly lessened if the field is large enough to discourage entry. It is the critic's task, then, not only to diminish to the vanishing point the works referred to above by the symbol *y* but to diminish judiciously yet decidedly the body of masterpieces referred to as *x*.

The proposition is by no means new. Few readers of this page could name a work written between 1200 and 1300, for instance; but writ-

ing was carried on in that century at a great rate. The works, however, have been wisely rejected; they have long been banished from the field of the "classics." Similarly, the many long poems of the century between 1400 and 1500 are in the discard. Even in more recent centuries, such once awe-inspiring names as Cowley, Denham, and Garth are dead, as are all the laureates of the eighteenth century up to and including Pye. Repeated injection of the pallid blood of favorable academic appraisal is keeping too many dramatists of the years 1590-1700 barely alive, but rejection in literature has in general been fairly well accomplished down to 1800. And this rejection was accomplished before 1900. As the nineteenth century neared its end, the laureates of the eighteenth century were as dead as they are nearly a half-century later.

Now by the same laws of analogy and reason, rejection by 1940 should have been effected similarly for the years 1800-1840, but such is

not the case. The garden of Romanticism has not been pruned. It has not even been weeded. And the aspirant for culture today is offered almost the whole respectable output of the early nineteenth century—down to the accession of Victoria in 1837—instead of the sorted best.

In reducing *x* then, we should first turn ourselves resolutely to the Romantic period and throw overboard much that we have been schooled to regard as classic. Excellent as is some of their work, Campbell, Southey, Rogers, Peacock, Hazlitt, DeQuincey, and others of their degree of excellence, must no longer add the weight of their voluminous output to the heavily burdened vessel of culture.

But of the "six great poets," Wordsworth, Scott, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, can all be kept?

This is the main point. Here the case will be won or lost. Wordsworth is inevitable. Every Englishman and every American, whether he knows it or not, is Wordsworthian in greater

or less degree. Like underground streams of water, the ideas of Wordsworth run in our minds. Scott must be retained: he exerted a vast influence on English, American, and Continental literature, and school children of today love his verse narratives, as well as his novels. Keats is likewise of lasting importance, intrinsically for restoring the Miltonic purple to English poetry, and also for his influence on Tennyson and Rossetti and on imagism wherever it has since flourished. But the others—Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley—should go. All will be remembered at least throughout the twentieth century for their six or eight best short pieces—even as the seventeenth century poets Herbert and Suckling are still remembered. But let them now be rejected as far as their whole message for the whole body of readers is concerned. Let Coleridge linger in the notes on Wordsworth—not otherwise, except for *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and the six or eight lyrics already "passed." As a Haliburton, Byron is al-

ready dead; except for his two poems on Chillon, his glorious rhetorical lyrics, and the best descriptive passages in *Childe Harold, III* and *IV*, he has little to offer the twentieth century. Shelley will be remembered because his *Adonais* is on Keats, and for his eight best lyrics. Are more necessary?

With the prose-writers an even more drastic cut might be effected. Should any Romantic essayist except Lamb be still regarded as important in the stream of English culture? And in the novel should anyone be added to the poet-novelist Scott except Jane Austen, whom Sir Jack Squire calls "the first perfect novelist and in many respects still the greatest of them all . . ."?

With the Romantic period reduced to Wordsworth, Scott, Keats, Lamb, and Austen, what an impetus culture would receive! How the literary traveler lost in the "tropical forest of Romanticism" (the phrase is again Squire's) would hail the chart to the five greatest goals

of his adventure. Would not everyone rush to master the five writers, if an agreement on the five could be achieved? And how the stock of culture, common, would soar upward if readers really knew the works of these four great men and this great woman!

But what of the writers of the Victorian period? A hint may be drawn from the recent history of redistricting the states for representation in Congress. Congress is supposed to allocate congressional representation according to population on the basis of each decennial census, but, as no reallocation was effected in 1920, the reallocation in 1930 covered twice the normal period. Likewise, since nearly a half century has seen no discarding, the Victorian period may be trimmed along with the period of Romanticism. But, as the Victorian period is closer to the middle third of the twentieth century, the pruning will have to be less close. Seventeen Victorian writers are here suggested as deserving to be kept alive as classics.

In the field of poetry Tennyson and Browning are impregnable. Tennyson was the voice of his age, and Browning remains unsurpassed for his compact dramatic presentations of character. To these should be added Austin Dobson, the Shakespeare of his field, the pleasant field of light verse. Swinburne is still a challenge in matters of technique. Though Rossetti is a doubtful case, his images will perhaps save him. But all the other poets should go. Arnold, with his piteous cry; Clough, who never quite rang the bell anyhow; Morris, damned by his own accurate phrase, "the idle singer of an empty day"; Christina Rossetti, despite the excellence of some of her poems for children, for Milne's are better; Mrs. Browning, though a few may still cling to her love-sonnets; and the others who held sway in the middle third of the century: the fire of their message has gone out, and they should be ready to depart. What indeed have any of them to offer to the middle third of the twentieth century?

In prose the novels of Dickens show signs of being alive forever. Neither women nor men will forget Meredith, who, with the soul of a prophet, began in 1859 to portray the women of today. Thackeray, Eliot, and Hardy will surely live at least a while longer in a few novels each. The others must go. And let the non-fiction prose be cut drastically too—a further lease on life being granted only to those writers (perhaps Carlyle, Ruskin, Mill, Huxley, and Newman) that are necessary for a proper understanding of the twentieth century.

Two playwrights need to be saved. They are Tom Robertson, whose *Caste* took up the thread of English drama where Sheridan dropped it in the eighteenth century, and the inimitable W. S. Gilbert, who lifted light opera into the realm of high art and stands with Dickens today as one of the two most vitally alive writers of the years 1830-1890.

Saved then are five poets, five novelists, five other prose writers, and two dramatists—for a

total of seventeen. Is such a reduction too drastic, with reference to the accepted canons of today? Yes! But no prohibition is to be laid on persons who wish to read Morris's *The Earthly Paradise*, Bulwer-Lytton's *Richelieu*, Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, and all the rest of the good minor classics of the Age of Victoria. Henceforth, however, let not a mastery of them be deemed essential to the possession of a common culture.

In conclusion let it be stressed that nothing arbitrary or definitive is intended by this list of twenty-two writers culled from the Romantic and Victorian periods. It is the best list the author can make, but he would not oppose, for instance, the addition of Shelley, Byron, or Leigh Hunt. He would not oppose the withdrawal of Swinburne and Rossetti, providing that the six or eight best poems of each of them be retained in the anthologies.

The point of the argument has nothing to do with the inclusion or exclusion of any one

writer. The point is that the number of supposedly great writers of the past, and more especially those of the nineteenth century, must be reduced if in general the people who constitute America are going to pay any attention to them as great writers. The nineteenth century is the test case. If a drastic reduction of "masterpieces" can be accomplished here, the number of blocks in the block house of literary culture need not be so great that the structure will fall.

The elimination of books which are not imperative will, finally, be a good thing not only for common culture and for the individual reader; it will be good also for authors, editors, publishers, and booksellers. Readers will purchase more masterpieces as soon as they can be sure of the masterpieces. They will purchase and read far more new books if the way among new books can somehow be made clear and clean. Reduce the masterpieces of the past on the basis of intrinsic value for mankind today.

Reduce the field of modern literature by eliminating the decadent and by ceasing to overpraise, for friendship or propaganda, the work of third rate writers. Limit the field in these ways and readers will take on a new joy and a new confidence. They will not only read but will encourage their children to read. Literature will enter upon a new day of usefulness and will have a popularity which it has not hitherto enjoyed.

CHAPTER V

"The Iron of English"—
New Types of Literature

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"The Iron of English"— New Types of Literature

THE great science of mathematics and the great art of literature, the latter enshrined in the gift of speech, afford a striking and an illuminating contrast.

Mathematics, at least to one who remains outside its deeper mysteries, seems fixed. Its laws are immutable. Anything new is, in the words of the poet Pope, "discovered not devised." The principles of the triangle laid down by Euclid two thousand years ago remain the same. Nations have risen and have been audited off the face of the earth. Languages have died out and languages have been born, but the square described upon the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is still the equivalent of the sum of the squares described on the other two sides. One can imagine that the proposition will still

be true when man on this planet has fulfilled his cycle and has disappeared. Can one not also with some feeling of certainty imagine that the laws of the triangle are the same even on the unseen planets which whirl with huge and far-off suns?

But language! By contrast all here is change! Let two brothers follow diverging paths on the two sides of a range of high hills or let them establish themselves on the opposite sides of a body of water, and their children will soon be telling their love, recounting their lore, and voicing their hopes in tongues alien to each other. Yes, even in one neighborhood time will work changes even as space makes them. The language of grandchildren differs from that of their grandparents: only slightly in happy times, but to a marked extent in periods of distress, when education and literature, the products of stability, are not present to restrain the tendency of speech sounds to undergo variations. In the troublous times of the fifteenth cen-

tury, for instance, the English language changed so rapidly that the smooth verse of Chaucer seemed abrupt and halting to Wyatt and Surrey, who felt constrained to recondition English meter by borrowing from Petrarch, the great Italian master of the lyric. It was doubtless the fear of the instability of the changing language of the small "Northern Island," as well as the desire of a continental audience, that caused Bacon and Milton to write their weightier prose in Latin. Even as late as Pope, the English language seemed a transient vehicle of speech:

> Our sons their father's failing language see,
> And such as Chaucer is shall Dryden be.

As language changes under the influence of geography and chronology, literature enshrined in language changes too; and thus the literature of the founders of the great races of the modern world is unintelligible to the present-day members of those races, unless unlocked by scholarship.

Some of the old types of literature are forever young, among them the song and the short narrative. Men of old voiced and men of today still voice their lyric love of woman, and their praise of their maker, in songs. Men since Hesiod, "who sang the *Works and Days*" a thousand years before Christ, have loved to tell tales; and other men for instruction or for the beguilement of an idle hour have delighted to hear or, in more recent years, to read. Nevertheless, with changing times, new types of literature arise even as new languages have arisen. By the nature of things all who use speech either explain, or argue, or describe, or narrate, as their forebears did; but the ways in which men adapt and blend explanation, argument, description, and narration are many and are largely allied to external factors of various kinds.

A single type of literature, the drama, affords sufficient illustrations. The ancient Greeks characteristically built their cities on or beside a hill determined by outcropping rock. They enjoyed

a mild climate and had the habit of gathering outdoors in great crowds for oratory or for the presentation of plays. Most naturally, their theaters were large open-air structures built of stone in a semi-circular fashion, in the curve of a convenient hillside. As the nature of the country influenced the theaters, the theaters in turn influenced the nature of the plays, and Greek drama owes as much to physical circumstances as to the genius of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

As medieval times in England were merging into modern, the people became interested in simple forms of drama, a literary type which had been dormant after the successful attack waged by Christians and patricians on the decadent comedy of declining Rome. The people also loved to gather for trade, entertainment, and religious satisfaction at the fairs held in English cities along with the Corpus Christi festivals of the church. Streets were narrow and public buildings, except cathedrals, were small.

Consequently the men who promoted the fairs —the members of the corporation of trade guilds—hit on the expedient of taking the drama to the audience. Each guild provided a pageant-wagon or movable stage and offered one scene of a long episodic "Miracle play" based on the chief events in the Bible. The wagons, sometimes as many as forty, were moved over an announced route and gave the citizens and visitors in all parts of the city a chance to witness a drama which they could not otherwise have seen. Needless to say, the physical facts of pageant wagon production determined the nature of the Miracle plays.

In the days before Shakespeare, the typical inn was a hollow square. The central yard was surrounded by balconies. Here was an ideal place for performances by strolling players, and the first regular English theater (1576) was modeled on the inn of the time. The plays of Shakespeare show evidences of having been written for the inn-yard type of stage.

The nineteenth century saw the abolition of the monopolies which from 1660 to 1843 limited to two the number of legitimate theaters in London. With any number of theaters permissible, the managers in the later nineteenth century built smaller theaters, and conversation took the place of declamation. The engineering skill of the century was responsible for much more accuracy in representing details in stage setting, and dialogue was modified accordingly. Again physical circumstances shaped the drama.

With equally great results the invention of printing shaped mightily the nature of things. Two new and important types of literature are owed exclusively to printing. These are the editorial and the novel. In fact the very word novel means new. Before printing there was no chance at all for the editorial, and there was little for the novel with its elaborate minutiae and its faithfully imitated conversations.

Now if physical circumstances and mechanical inventions foster innovations, it is not sur-

prising that new literary types have been evolved in the twentieth century, a period characterized by such amazing changes and by such marvelous progress in the mechanic arts. Two of the new literary types have beyond question reached the level of good literature. These two are the motion picture and the radio broadcast.

When the motion picture appeared in public in the early years of the century with its jerky, poorly connected sequences it was certainly not a part of literature. It was perhaps not yet literature even when in great silent spectacles such as *The Birth of a Nation* it filled theaters throughout the land. However well the titles may have been written, the story was in pictures and these pictures were exaggerated in action to the point of absurdity, as anyone who attends a revival can testify.

But with the talking picture the story is different. The talking picture was from its beginning a part of literature. The fact that it was not and is not in print is of no consequence.

Literature existed for thousands of years without print, and some of it existed without manuscripts, being handed down by the human voice.

The talking picture, then, is beyond all question a type of literature. What is more, it is a very valuable type of literature, perfected in art and tremendous in its potentialities for entertainment and for instruction. And let no one think that photography is the main part of the modern motion picture any more than that the scenery is the main part of a stage play. The dialogue is the heart of the talking picture. This dialogue is often managed with much literary skill. A third witnessing of such a picture as *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* is even more convincing than the first that the dialogue has received the utmost in literary care.

Unfortunately the makers of dialogue in pictures do not receive their due. Their names are listed among the hurried preliminaries along with the names of those who man the cameras and design the dresses, but their service to lit-

erature is not properly recognized, and their recognition is too ephemeral. The fame of Thornton Wilder is such that one remembers that he was responsible for some of the beautiful dialogue in *Dark Angel*; but who was responsible for the haunting words of *Robin Hood*, who for the valuable fun uttered by Frank Morgan and his able supporting cast in *Paradise for Three*? Whoever they were, they deserved more public fame than they received, when the pictures were new; and certainly deserve something better than the oblivion which has become theirs in a very few years.

Talking pictures should not, moreover, be allowed to die. It is absurd that one cannot see a picture if one happens to be ill or busy the three or six days that it is offered in a village or city. Great pictures such as *Berkeley Square* or *The Informer* or *Man of Aran* should be available in film libraries throughout the nation for the edification and delight of Americans in the years to come.

The radio broadcast, the other type of literature resulting from a twentieth century invention, is still in the making. Radio is used to popularize existing forms of literature—poems, stories, oratory, and what not; but there is a marked tendency toward developing a special type, the broadcast. The broadcast will, like the stage play, be largely determined by the issuing medium. As the nature and length of the play are determined by the needs of a certain type of theater, so the nature and length of the broadcast will be determined by the needs of the radio industry and its customers. Broadcasts then will be thirteen and a half minutes long or twenty-eight and a half minutes long, or slightly less than an hour—in order that they may be presented in full and yet allow time for the necessary station identification and advertising so characteristic of radio broadcasting in this country today.

Of the much that has been done in adapting old works of literature or in producing new

ones for broadcasting, nothing has, perhaps, been more significant than Archibald MacLeish's poem *The Fall of the City*. This poem was written expressly for a fifteen-minute radio program and has since been published with details of its "first broadcast," the printed text being unchanged from that of the version released on the air.

Such a radio poem may be the forerunner of many examples of a new type of literature. But the newness will be only in novelty—not in essentials. Poetry is a vocal art and it has flourished best where it has continued to be a vocal art. It is best when said, and not when read. The radio then, as it fosters the development of a type of poetry suitable to its purposes, may serve to rehabilitate all poetry. Various broadcasting stations now present numerous short poems and will doubtless present more and more as the years pass, but MacLeish offers the hope that radio may persuade the public to accept again the oral presentation of a poem long

enough to comply with Aristotle's dictum on tragedy:

> . . . The greater the length, the more beautiful will the piece be by reason of its size, provided that the whole be perspicuous.

It was Archibald MacLeish who coined the noble phrase, "the iron of English." The great flexible growing English language is now the home speech of some two hundred million people, in all parts of the globe. It is the "second speech" of most of the others—Chinese, Germans, Japanese, and Russians among them. And —miracle of miracles—under the standardizing compulsion of the talking picture and the radio the tendency of the English language to change has been slowed down almost to the vanishing point. We of 1940 are approximately as far from the birth of Wordsworth as Wyatt was from the birth of Chaucer, but, thanks to the spread of education and the vogue of the printed page, the speech of Wordsworth is not different in any appreciable way from the

speech of 1940. Scarcely has the rhythm of a single line or the rime of a single stanza been affected. The English language will not stand still—nothing alive does so—but its changes will be even slower under the sway of radio and will no longer annoy its users; and no writer need ever again fear that the changes in the English language will render incomprehensible any golden thought entrusted to it!

Our better books will continue to go out to our own speech-brothers and to the others who know English. So will our better periodicals. But these others for whom English is the second speech are reached in mass mostly by the motion picture and the radio. These two great inventions have given us two types of literature—one great already, the other great in potentiality. Both are to be taken seriously for both have immense value in entertainment, education, and propaganda. Both should be free from the filth of decadent sentimentalism, not only for Anglo-Saxon prestige, but because of the responsibility

which goes with power, even with the power of language. And throughout the world both of these two types, the talking picture and the radio broadcast, will be factors to be reckoned with—types of literature to stand with the other great types, while

> . . . the iron of English
> Rings from a tongue.

CHAPTER VI

Censorship, Gangs, and the Tyranny of Minorities

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ANYONE who has visited a dozen or a score of countries may well be proud of the newspapers of Great Britain and the United States of America. However much the characteristic papers of the Anglo-Saxon powers may fail to measure up to the ideal standards of an individual appraiser, these papers, whether in New York or London or in a small city far from either metropolis, are incomparably ahead of anything to be found even in the capitals of the other great powers—to say nothing of the papers published in other cities of the great non-English powers or the papers published in the smaller countries.

Many factors are involved in this superior excellence. First and foremost, it must be admitted that, with all their depressions and their

unemployment, Britain and America have throughout the twentieth century enjoyed a degree of material prosperity unapproached elsewhere in the world, and this economic prosperity has been reflected in the ability to pay for good newspapers. Moreover, the fact that two hundred million people speak English has made great news agencies possible. The taste of Anglo-Saxon readers leads them to demand facts instead of opinions, and the presentation of facts, distorted though they often are in late years, is the outstanding function of the Anglo-Saxon newspaper in the twentieth century. But the chief reason for the excellence of Anglo-Saxon newspapers lies in a priceless heritage—the freedom of the press.

Relying, whether consciously or unconsciously, on this heritage, Englishmen and Americans believe their newspapers. They are aware that political or economic bias has always shaped news somewhat, but still they believe what they read. This belief, and in the past the

reasonable justification for it, have certainly been the chief glory of American journalism.

But the freedom of the press in America is seriously threatened at the present time, not from without, not by the readers or the government, but by the publishers themselves. Newspaper proprietors and other publishers are about to throw away a priceless heritage of the race for much less than a mess of pottage.

When the founders of the American nation established the freedom of the press, they could no more foresee the present publishing business than they could foresee modern transportation, no one of whose major systems from railroads on to airplanes had even been thought of. The slow hand presses turned out mainly school books, prayer books, and Bibles, and the freedom of the press was designed to allow people the unjeopardized right to express in print their own religious views and their own views about politics, rights happily enjoyed in twentieth century England as well as in America, as is seen

in the undisturbed freedom of those who regularly assail their monarch in Britain or those who attack the President of the United States himself in America.

The framers of our government never dreamed, however, that it would be necessary to consider the question of indecency or immoral propaganda as part of the problem of the freedom of the press. But the twentieth century has seen the rise of just such a problem. In stories, photographs, drawings, essays, and advertisements the debasement of the American public is attempted hourly—partly for gain and partly in the interest of subversive propaganda designed to weaken the Anglo-Saxon race. The founders never dreamed that a situation would arise in which a few advertisers could dictate to the newspapers of the whole nation, but such a dictatorship is now possible—if not actually and fully in operation.

If in doubt as to the debased nature of much of our periodical literature, see almost any met-

ropolitan news stand. If unconvinced in regard to the doctoring of news to make it serve the aims of advertisers, read the following words uttered at the University of Pennsylvania in 1938 by William Allen White, owner-editor of the Emporia (Kansas) *Gazette*, and an outstanding figure in twentieth century journalism:

> The new menace to the freedom of the press, a menace in this country vastly more acute than the menace from government, may come through the pressure not of one group of advertisers, but of a wide sector of newspaper advertisers. Newspaper advertising is now placed somewhat, if not largely, through nationwide advertising agencies. . . . As advisers the advertising agencies may exercise unbelievably powerful pressure upon newspapers. . . .

There has indeed arisen in twentieth century America a conflict among life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the inherent rights of man, referred to by Jefferson in the Declaration of American Independence. In recent years our

population has become so great and our mechanical inventions have been used so recklessly—whether cars or firearms or printing presses—that an adjustment of domain is necessary among the three rights named as inalienable in our great state paper. Thus one man's liberty to drive a car when intoxicated or otherwise incapacitated would seem inherently inferior to another man's right to life for himself and his wife and his children. A man's happiness, based likewise on the security of his children, is superior to another man's liberty to destroy that happiness. Thus a man's desire that his children may grow up free from the corruption of the soul that comes from reading bad books seems inherently superior to another man's liberty to encourage that corruption of the soul. Finally one man's liberty to suppress, withhold, or pervert the truth should be inferior to another man's right to have access to the truth.

No one can honestly maintain that liberty as exemplified in the freedom of the press was

meant by the Founders to allow the glorification of vice and to permit exhortations to follow a course of moral turpitude. About this there can be no doubt whatever. No one, moreover, can maintain that the freedom of the press was meant to allow the deliberate deception of readers in regard to the vital facts of the world. There is finally no question whatsoever that both of these widespread abuses of the freedom of the press should be stopped. There is even less question that they will be stopped.

The question is simply: Will they be stopped by the press itself or by some other agency? The most hopeful sign in twentieth century journalism was the self-imposed censorship of the British press with regard to the Simpson-Edward VIII affair. Similarly hopeful, though in the allied field of the cinema, was the recent betterment of the quality of sound-films achieved under pressure from the Catholic church. Very significant also was the fact that the National Association of Broadcasters

adopted at its 1939 convention a code which required that radio programs observe "accepted standards of good taste." If the English press could shut out the Simpson story except for the necessary news of the abdication, the American press can surely censor itself. If the motion picture industry and the radio broadcasting industry can voluntarily curb their lewd and venal members, the publishing industry should certainly be able to curb its lewd and venal members. Will it take the necessary steps? If not, a popular leader will soon cry out: "Give me power, and your children will live in a decent world." He will get the power; the press will be cleaned; but will the exercise of power cease when the question of morals is settled? Will the man who has reestablished decency and morality in our literature be content? Or will he, once his machinery has been set up, attempt a corresponding but unfortunate effort at censorship along other lines? The latter is at least likely, and is perhaps even probable. A self-

imposed clean-up by the press is thus seen as the chief safeguard of the freedom of the press, and perhaps even the chief safeguard of democracy.

A clean-up will also help us in our foreign relations. America loves the rôle of "Grand Exalted Savior of the World," as *The Saturday Evening Post* recently expressed it. But our commendable desire for moral leadership is especially exasperating to foreign nations because they do not understand how the same people can offer moral leadership along with a consignment of indecent books and magazines. We offer ourselves as moral advisers to the Japanese, but they have, at least until recently, had to cut out indecencies from our films before allowing them to be shown to the Japanese public. We contemplate with horror Germany's military ruthlessness and anti-democratic philosophy, yet we must nevertheless admit that the German conception of decency resulted during the late thirties in the banning of the more

ghastly literary products of our decadent sentimentalism. "But," someone may say, "Japan and Germany are not our friends. What is the attitude of friendly nations?" The attitude is the same as in the case of Japan and Germany. Such countries as Great Britain, Ireland, and Australia, which are our friends, have censored the output of the American press. Many a time Britain forces an article to be torn from an American magazine before the magazine is offered for sale to the British public. Ireland has recently banned an American novel on the ground that it is "in general tendency indecent." Australia recently held up on the grounds of "moral turpitude" a shipment of three hundred thousand magazines and passed a law against the uncensored entry of our magazines into that country.

Perhaps a clean-up in literature might be achieved by the Catholic Church in somewhat the same fashion that a clean-up in the motion pictures was effected by the 1936 Encyclical of

Pope Pius XI and by the follow-up work undertaken by American Catholics. Pius XI held that the purpose of art is the perfection of morals and demanded that the cinema conform. The motion picture of 1940 does not, of course, live up to the high demand of the Pope, but the Pope's efforts have enormously bettered the motion picture.

Similar efforts by the Catholic Church or by any large body of protestants might likewise help the output of the business of publishing. The present Catholic plan of recommending good books is commendable, but it does not go far enough. The recommendation or condemnation of works already before the public is much less effective than the improvement at the source which was accomplished in the case of the motion pictures.

Now the number of people in the publishing business who wish a debased literature or perversion of facts is but a small minority of the whole number of persons engaged in that busi-

ness. Can not the substantial majority of good Americans in the business develop the leadership that will help the nation, the race, and themselves? Hollywood, unless it loses everything in national resentment at its growing addiction to propaganda, would seem to have begun to do so. Hollywood would not have America go as far as Quebec where a law prohibits admission to the theaters for all persons under sixteen, exception being made by the Province Authorities only at infrequent intervals for such a picture as Walt Disney's *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs.* But Hollywood disapproves of the use of theaters as day nurseries where the city mother turns her children over to darkness, lack of exercise, and the intoxication of excitement, while she goes off for bridge, window-shopping, or the necessary earning of a livelihood. In the bulletin published by the Association of Motion Picture Producers at Hollywood, it is explicitly stated that no child under eight should see any full-length picture, and

pictures suitable for older children are specially noted. In the review of motion pictures produced in any one month about three-fourths are listed as suitable for "adults" and only about one-fourth are designated as suitable for the "family." What a contrast with the situation a decade ago! If Hollywood's own leadership—prompted by the Catholic Church and, of course, by enlightened selfishness—has made such progress in a few years, can not a similar leadership within the publishing business work similar improvements in that field? Can American publishers allow the situation to remain so bad that the government may have to step in—with the possible sequel of curbing where no moral issue is involved?

The fact that a relatively small number of people can force bad books and periodicals and warped news on a majority opposed to such things is an illustration of one of the dangers against which a democracy should take vigilant precaution. This danger is the power which

may be assumed by an organized aggressive minority. A democracy, with its light-fitting harness of government, lacks the means to check the excesses or the outrages of small subversive groups. The most successful and most hideous of these groups is composed of criminals and criminal lawyers. The most terrible phenomenon in the modern world is the fact, proved by the incontrovertible figures of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, that America's chief business is crime. Ahead of the basic and most important of all the works of man, agriculture; ahead of manufacturing in the world's greatest manufacturing nation; ahead of transportation in its manifold space-annihilating forms, stands the big business of our criminals and criminal lawyers. Here are some ominous words written by J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, while guest columnist for Walter Winchell's "On Broadway," July 10, 1939:

. . . There are four criminals in America for every school teacher.

. . . Our criminals outnumber the total enrollment of our colleges and universities by three and a half to one.

. . . No criminal could exist long without assistance.

. . . The annual crime bill of America is fifteen billion dollars, greater than America's food bill, or more than the combined national, state, county, and municipal tax bill.

But leaving crime and returning to American letters, we find that entirely too much influence is wielded by gangs and small but aggressive minorities.

The gang, so prominent now, has always existed in literature. As presiding officer of the "Literary Club," the great Dr. Samuel Johnson himself was nothing more than the head of a gang which, save for the adherents of the rival Walpole-Gray gang, dominated the England of the day. Johnson, critic, lexicographer, conver-

sationalist, and what not; Boswell, biographer, and much more, as recent research has proved; Gibbon, historian of the decline and fall of Rome; Goldsmith, great in drama, novel, essay, and poetry; Garrick, the supreme actor of his century; Burke, who wrote on the sublime and on the American Revolution; Reynolds, a superlative painter, and president of the Royal Academy—did not these men help each other?

The great men of this galaxy were on the side of the angels—they were celestial rather than carnal—but the point is that mutual admiration and common interest led them to support the work of each other.

So it has been in every period—and so it is to-day. Most writers congregate and work in gangs, and the gangs do not always happen to have on their roster such names as made illustrious Johnson's "Literary Club." Praise follows friendship rather than merit. Let a novelist, for instance, bring out a new book. The critic, the playwright, the reviewers, and the rest in his

gang hail it as the book of the year. Likewise all will hail the new play by the playwright—and so on, all the way around the circle of membership. Provincial reviewers will be likely to fall in step. The result is that a gang member will sometimes receive national acclaim for a work which deserves oblivion, whereas a nonmember may fail to receive notice for a truly excellent work. Such gangs prevent wholly honest criticism and are bad at best, but they are a positive menace when their expressions of mutual admiration are poured forth on obscene and subversive books. Readers should be on guard against criticism which rotates about the works of any one group of writers.

Another gang, far harder to deal with because it works behind the scenes and pulls the ropes of financial power, is the type of gang alluded to by William Allen White. This gang, through the pressure of advertisers upon news agencies and circulation managers, undertakes the shaping of American public opinion not nec-

essarily or primarily in the interest of the American public and the American nation, but solely in the interest of the controlling gang. Such a gang may be the executive committee for an organized minority which is seeking to force its will on the majority.

On the order of the gang, but stronger and more sinister than the worst of the gangs, is this organized minority. The gang is small, a dozen or so, perhaps—surely under a hundred. The organized minority may be thousands or it may be millions, but in any case it, too, is but a small fraction of a nation of a hundred and thirty million people. The gang may do harm in a large way, but the organized minority may do harm in an even larger way. It may, for the furtherance of its own sinister ambitions, decide on a program of perilous military and naval unpreparedness. It may decide not to do business with a certain nation—and America may consequently sag into a depression because of the loss of trade with that nation. The organized minor-

ity may take an interest in education—it may throw out a Shakespeare play from the school curriculum; it may prevent religious or moral instruction; it may prevent the vaccination of school children or other health measures deemed necessary by the best medical knowledge of the day. In these and many other ways a minority may exercise its tyranny.

The ultimate peril, however, is not to the Anglo-Saxon majority. The Anglo-Saxon majority in this country is still numerically overwhelming. Fortunately also, through the English language, and English culture and institutions, it absorbs rapidly its minorities of North European stock. All the way down the map of Europe from Scandinavia to Italy the countries have sent us immigrants whose adaptability to absorption differs only in degree. As soon as he speaks English, a Scandinavian is received as an Anglo-Saxon. The same thing is true of the Frenchman, the Dutchman, and the pre-1900 German. Even though his name has a

foreign sound, the Italian is capable of assimilation, more or less rapidly according to the characteristics of the individual and according to the numbers in a given area. Several checkings of the social page of an Italian-American newspaper in a southern city each showed that in a majority of listed engagements and marriages one party had an Anglo-Saxon name. The prevailing of the Anglo-Saxon majority and the Anglo-Saxon tradition is not in doubt. Descendants of the Dutch of New York, the Swedes of Delaware, the Germans of Pennsylvania, the French of South Carolina and New York, the Catholic English of Maryland and the Protestant English of Virginia and Massachusetts and the other colonies accepted early the Anglo-Saxon tradition and will not fully and finally surrender this heritage and their ancestral rights to twentieth century newcomers of alien race or non-Christian philosophies of life.

The ultimate peril is to the organized minority. Majorities are always kindly; they feel se-

cure; they are apathetic. They are tolerant of minorities. But there are limits even to the patience of majorities. If goaded too much, they may turn and crush the goaders. The illustrations may be drawn from foreign countries—at the choice of the reader.

For the sake of American democracy; for the sake of our priceless heritage, the freedom of the press; for the sake of maintaining the United States as a land where men of many races and many religions live together without bloodshed, let matters be squarely faced. As President Butler of Columbia University pointed out as long ago as 1903 in a great small book, *The American As He Is,* the United States of America is at heart a decent Christian nation of North European stock. It will be this as a democracy if possible—it will be this anyway. And minority groups while enjoying their freedom should not seek to oppress the majority. There is danger to all of them. Woe to the purveyors of foul literature, woe to the sub-

versive gangs, woe to the tyrannical minorities if the decent Christian North European majority is ever compelled to assert itself by force.

As the nineteen-forties dawn, the shape of the future is still uncertain, but tendencies are at least pointing toward a better day. Advertising, especially the advertising of books, is less indecent than it was five years ago. A great New York newspaper is still proud to carry the slogan, "All the News that's Fit to Print." Another great New York newspaper claims in a display advertisement to be "written and edited so that none will blush for its contents." A third great Metropolitan daily carried recently a signed editorial entitled "Let's protect youth from obscene books." After stating that it is not "morally right that some one who has a twisted complex should be given the opportunity to express views that might influence immature minds," the writer concluded by citing the psychological truth that degeneracies rarely occur except among people who have

been informed of such degeneracies by decadent writers. These are by no means all the favorable signs that could be charted, but coming as they do from New York they occasion hope.

The world is growing tired of the obscenities of decadent sentimentalism. It has already moved forward in a recent determination to make war upon crime, a war which should include the driving of the needless lurid crime story from the front pages of our newspapers. Perhaps the gangs and the minorities will read the handwriting on the wall and no longer try to oppress the majority. And America may yet fulfill the destiny which was determined by the race and the language and the ideals of the founders of the thirteen colonies.

CHAPTER VII

The "Institutions of Teachers"

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ALFRED of Wessex is rightly called Alfred the Great. All the pages of a book would scarcely suffice to give the many reasons for this magnificent and, in English annals, this unique title. Alfred saved his country from a pagan invader; gave it a code of good laws; established a naval policy of outbuilding the enemy on a two to one basis, a policy followed for a thousand years; gave his country a body of prose literature; and established "an institution of teachers."

No one reading Alfred's "Preface" to his translation of the *Pastoral Care* of Pope Gregory the Great can think that the king of Wessex regarded the "institution of teachers" as the least of his services to his country. The reader of the "Preface" instinctively thinks of Thomas Jefferson, another man of multiple talents, who

was instrumental in founding another great Anglo-Saxon nation. As his career drew to a close, Jefferson composed his own epitaph. He made no mention of his having been the third president of the United States, but stressed his work in founding the nation, in improving the law, and in providing for the education of its youth. Thousands who journey each year to Jefferson's home, Monticello, pause to read the self-epitaph of the versatile genius:

> Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and father of the University of Virginia.

As Alfred's career drew to a close, he may well have regarded his three greatest services as giving his country its freedom from foreign domination, its laws, and its new school. "To God Almighty be thanks," wrote the amazing king, "that we now have an institution of teachers."

What was this institution of teachers? Some writers claim that it was Oxford University, but

the claim is absurd unless one adds the admission that the school was later moved to Oxford, for the Thames was the Northern boundary of Alfred's Kingdom and his founding his beloved "institution of teachers" north of the Thames in or near the territory of his pagan enemy is unthinkable. Alfred's school was probably founded at Winchester, the capital, or some other southern town. It may, however, have been moved to Oxford when the kings of Wessex, Alfred's descendants, became the kings of all England.

Oxford—by whomever founded—and the sister and similar Cambridge have become great phenomena of the world. What a halo of wonder hovers about these universities! Their origin is lost in the mists of the past, their history is glorious, their present is admirable, their future is undreamable!

I saw the spires of Oxford
  As I was passing by,
The gray spires of Oxford
  Against the pearl-gray sky

wrote Winnifred Letts. And from the peaceful quadrangles of the twenty-two colleges dominated by the age-old heaven-pointing spires what a parade of immortals has gone forth! Kings and empire-builders; poets and scholars; inventors; heroes of the camp and the church have garnered their golden dreams at Oxford. Nor has Cambridge lagged behind. A similar cavalcade of immortals has left the peaceful fields and lawns beside the slow and winding Cam to go forth and struggle and serve in the world. Indeed the final crown of honor of Oxford and Cambridge is bestowed because their fame is the fame of service. At these schools men have in literature shaped immortal thoughts; they have in science moved the boundary-posts of knowledge; and in theology they have even periodically revitalized the Christian faith.

The almost millennial record of Oxford and Cambridge and similar records of universities in France and Italy gave by the close of the

nineteenth century an incredibly high but in general thoroughly merited prestige to the professors whose study and teaching had wrought the fame of the universities. The Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, and even later periods had seen some outside interference with research and by the end of the 19th century it was generally agreed that university professors should not be hindered from publishing their discoveries or their views. The gradually developed privilege came to be known as "academic freedom." Academic freedom is today, like the freedom of the press, a cherished Anglo-Saxon heritage. It is likewise a heritage which is being put into jeopardy by persons whom the principle was never intended to embrace and by conduct which was never meant to be tolerated. For this situation there are several reasons.

The glory of Oxford and Cambridge caused those great universities to be complimented by the founding of many similar institutions in the United States—not in two locations but in

nearly a thousand. The coats of arms, the Latin mottoes, the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts are tributes to Oxford and Cambridge. So is the title of professor.

In the latter instance there is however a striking difference. The university professor in England is a man of achieved eminence. Years of study or years of successful work in a college and a record of conspicuous attainment precede appointment to a University professorship. In the thousand institutions of higher learning in America, on the contrary, the average person bearing the title of professor is of no such eminence. There is probably no institution in America every one of whose professors would qualify; there are beyond question many American institutions no one of whose professors would qualify as of proved ability and eminence.

The British qualifications for a professorship were not demanded in America before 1919, and even more notably have not been demanded

since. In 1919, the American colleges and universities were faced with a crisis. With reference to 1914, enrollment had in many instances increased by much more than a hundred per cent. Meanwhile service in the army had delayed or made impossible the academic careers of the best men who ordinarily would have been preparing in the years 1917 to 1919 for college teaching. In the years following 1919, therefore, a serious problem had to be met. There were many more than the usual number of students. There were fewer than the usual number of properly qualified teachers. The result was that college or university teachers of the past generation have not been, on the average, as able as were their predecessors before the World War, 1914-1919. Collectively, however, these teachers are not to be looked down upon. Many, of course, are eminent under any standard and render lofty service to mankind. Many others, appointed with meager qualifications, have won the doctorate under ardu-

ous circumstances. These groups and still others work hard in the service of their schools and serve America by helping instruct the hordes of young people whom recurring Septembers thrust through the gates of the colleges.

But those college teachers who are inspired by some sort of ideal of service have as colleagues an alarmingly increasing group of persons whose ideals are exactly the reverse of service, whose triple aim is the corruption of morals, the overthrow of the Christian religion, and the destruction of Americanism. Teachers of this stripe are found in many branches of learning, but chiefly in English and the so-called social sciences. They have entered these fields because of the opportunities offered for various forms of perversion.

With the decline of Latin and Greek, the English department has become the chief "cultural" department of the modern college and university. The field of English and American literature is so vast that a very limited selection

of works can be taught and the teacher bent on corrupting the youth of this country can easily select writings which he can pervert to his purpose. His harm is especially great in the freshman course which is ostensibly a course in writing. The student must have a book of models chosen from modern authors, and the teacher can and does use this "book of models" to present his particular brand of propaganda. The daring radicals are not satisfied with shaping their own anthologies; they even try to force revisions of existing works. In the early spring of 1940, for instance, members of the textbook committee in a large university informed a publisher that they would favor the use of his firm's freshman anthology if an essay advocating church-going were removed.

In the social sciences the opportunities for malicious corruption of youth are perhaps as great as in English departments. Into economics, sociology, psychology, philosophy, government, and history the propagandists have crowded.

A half-baked young economist shouts forth as eternal truth an untested and perhaps chimerical doctrine derived from some alien group to which he adheres. Far too many sociologists and psychologists devote themselves to the popularization of courses on criminality and abnormalities. Evil men in philosophy, government, and history can likewise find their easy opportunities for promoting evil.

The surging into the colleges of hordes of destructive teachers is in a way a tribute to the colleges. From the colleges come inevitably the nation's leaders. The controllers of subversion in this country know this. They know that knowledge is power. They know that both Roosevelts, Taft, Wilson, Coolidge, and Hoover have been college men with brilliant records. They know that four members of the present supreme court are graduates of one great law school, that of Columbia University. The would-be destroyers of America know also that what is taught in the colleges soon filters down

into the high schools and even into the elementary schools, and also spreads laterally into the professional schools, including theology. The subverter thus compliments the college and shows his astuteness by trying to control it through filtering in his agents—everywhere—but especially in the English and social science departments.

In attacking the college the subverters are storming the very citadel of Anglo-Saxon ethical standards, Christianity, and Americanism. The college and university have from time immemorial been bulwarks of state and church. Kings later than Alfred founded several now famous colleges. This is true even for America. The venerable name of William and Mary reveals its royal patrons. Columbia was founded as King's College by George II and did not assume its present name until America was independent. College and church have been inseparable. Out of Christian Oxford went John Wesley, founder of Methodism, and John Henry

Newman, the great prose-writer and Roman Cardinal. Academic freedom was designed to give scope to geniuses like Wesley and Newman and certainly not to allow scoundrels a chance to corrupt the best youth of the nation. But such corrupters now abound in the colleges. They are a minority, even in the departments of literature and social science where they chiefly flourish, but they are an aggressive and a dangerous minority.

How did such people gain a foothold in the colleges? The first of the corrupters were found among those who seized academic positions while men of better qualifications were in the uniformed service of the United States in the years 1917 to 1919. The doctrine they spread varied of course but in general added up to the lie that the men who did not go to war refrained from high moral purpose and that those who went were rowdy adventurers not quite to be tolerated in refined circles. The slackers held their jobs and those in literature and the social

sciences found it easy to recommend books that defamed America's part in the war. It was but a step further to join in the campaign for attacking the heroes of American history and for belittling Anglo-Saxon ethical and moral standards. Wherever men of this type wielded any sort of executive influence, they filled vacancies with recruits of their own stamp. In all cases they exerted their baleful influence when and as they could, seeking equally to corrupt the thinking of students and of newly appointed instructors.

Their methods were many. A few in the realm of literature may profitably be noted. The corrupt English teachers made fun of the older didactic literature. In teaching earlier literature they stressed occasional obscenities rather than the great truths and the great beauties. They dug up and popularized forgotten authors whose themes or attitudes served a vicious purpose. They heaped high praise on the more morbid portions of the newer literature, getting

the books into libraries, fraternity houses, and other likely places. They praised indecent authors, even those of no talent whatever. They belittled authors of decent books, even great geniuses such as Kipling. They sometimes got hold of the book-review pages of newspapers and magazines and joined press and college in the unholy alliance.

Men of this stamp solemnly assert allegiance to the ideals of the controlling board of a college or university and immediately flaunt their contempt of such ideals. The promoters of corrupt literature in colleges accept money from state, church, or other controlling bodies and at the same time try to frustrate the purpose of those bodies and destroy the ideals for which they stand. No crime could be more venal than this. The criminal aim is to corrupt college people, the natural leaders of the future, in the hope that thereby the character of the whole nation may be undermined. This is again a sin—against society and the race. Finally, since so

many people trust any professor or any thing they see in print, these evil professors of literature and social science drag along after them many bewildered teachers who can't quite stomach the immoralities and the propaganda but talk about them anyhow as something they have read about! This is a third sin—that of leading the unknowing into evil ways.

Never was scripture misquoted by the devil for his purposes as outrageously as "academic freedom" has been invoked to protect the evil members of the teaching profession in recent decades. The cry of "academic freedom" has in the immediate past been raised by no great scholar whose research was denied print. It has usually been raised by men who have flagrantly violated ethical standards by taking pay from an institution and at the same time trying to undermine the ideals of the founders of the institution. Even so, deans, presidents, and boards of trustees have been intimidated. Men who have devoted their lives to corrupting

Anglo-Saxon ethical and moral standards are in 1940 unmolested by existing authorities. For love of evil, for present financial profit, or from hope of sinecure positions in the regime that would follow the fall of democracy, they carry on their work.

How can the work of such scoundrels be stopped? Only by an outraged public. No one is secure when a whole outraged public turns against him. As with books, so with teaching. The American public must take an ever keener interest in what goes on in America. Above all, men and women must take an ever keener interest in what goes on in their own communities. Everything that is settled by a higher authority means that much weakening of democracy. Democracy can function only in small local units. It is then the sacred duty of the patrons of every institution of higher learning to force the trustees and the executives of that institution in the direction of safeguarding Americanism and safeguarding Anglo-Saxon ethical and moral standards. Patrons and non-

patrons must demand patriotism and decency in the colleges and universities to which America sends and will continue to send its young men and its young women.

With regard to a notorious appointment to a New York college in 1940, the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of New York, William T. Manning, wrote as follows:

> With the facts as to Earl Russell's teachings before them, it is an offense against public decency that a majority of the Board of Higher Education should uphold this appointment. But the issue has been clearly raised, and I do not believe that our right-minded citizens will allow the matter to rest here.
>
> Most serious of all is the support given to this appointment by some of our leading educators under the plea of academic freedom, which in this case is a distinctly invalid plea. The support given to this scandalous appointment by educators and by some heads of colleges should open the eyes of our citizens generally and especially of parents to the influences which are today at work upon the minds of our young people in many of our colleges and universities.

So much for safeguarding morals. The same sort of words about the same sort of people could be written on Americanism, for those who attack Anglo-Saxon ethical standards and those who attack America are the same. They are corrupters and would-be corrupters of American youth; they are destroyers or would-be destroyers of democracy; they are saboteurs or would-be saboteurs of the United States of America.

Is the college then to be an institution in which the saboteur and the psychopath can perform at will? Certainly America will not long accept such a conception of its institutions of higher learning.

The college is the well-spring of American education and culture. The spring must be made pure in order that the stream of American thought may not be corrupted. A cleaning-out of the spring is also necessary to save the hard-won and valuable right of academic freedom; for the very ones who now cry "academic free-

dom" are the ones who want this freedom ended—on their own terms. Pollution must be prevented for the further reason of preserving the respect that the great majority of Americans now feel—and, for the most part, rightly—for their colleges. Finally, the American college is a national democratic institution, and its freedom from defilement is necessary if it is to remain an effective source of democratic ideals.

CHAPTER VIII

"Proud Women . . . the Ladies of the Future"

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"Proud Women . . . the Ladies of the Future"

IN AS lovely and as moving a bit of prose as has been produced in English in the twentieth century, Sir James Barrie describes what might have happened at the funeral of George Meredith. The brief services are over. The mourners leave Box Hill and go their several ways through the Surrey countryside. The hearse rolls away with the body of the great novelist, but is in fact empty, for George Meredith, now immortal, remains behind for the real ceremony, a greeting of welcome and love from "a mighty company," the children of his creative mind. The characters given life by Meredith stand in line against the hedge of box-wood. In Barrie's words, "Each of his proud women carried a flower, and the hands of all his men were ready for the salute." The novelist,

radiant with a recaptured and eternal youth, is on his way to join the company of his predecessors, the supreme writers of England. As he steps for the last time across the lawn of Box Hill, the men salute him. The women give him their flowers, but, again in the words of Barrie, "they did not go with him, these, his splendid progeny, the ladies of the future, they went their ways to tell the whole earth of the new world for women which he had been the first to foresee."

Whether Meredith or someone else was first to foresee the "new world for women" is perhaps debatable. A good case could be made for Tennyson, because *The Princess* (1847), which appeared a dozen years before Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), had as its heroine a woman who not only received but directed higher education. In fact the lovely Princess for whom the poem is named was, in W. S. Gilbert's phrase, "the proprietor of a ladies' seminary!" Despite some banter at her expense this splendid young woman was taken

seriously by Tennyson, for he had her marry the hero, a forward-looking man, in all respects worthier than his father who voiced the old order of things. Even Tennyson's banter may have been artfully designed to win a reading by conservatives who would not have read the poem if the banter had been lacking. On the basis of the poem taken as a whole, Tennyson must be credited with foreseeing, not the nineties with their aggressive and sometimes freakish feminists who were avoided by men, but the nineteen-forties with their charming office workers, teachers, nurses, and others who follow careers for a time, and then, like the Princess, forsake them for marriage.

But the relative claims of Meredith, Tennyson, or someone else as prophets of the modern woman must not be argued here. The point is that the women of the twentieth century have received all the rights and privileges which their restless sisters of the nineteenth dreamed of—and more.

Of her right to own property and her right

to receive an education, woman has made noble use. That she has made equally noble use of her slow-won right to vote is open to serious question. Many American states, beginning with Wyoming, had already yielded full electoral rights before 1920 when the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States thrust on all the millions of American women the responsibility of voting, and with it the sad choice between Cox and Harding. Suffrage for women thirty and over was granted in England in 1918; and in 1928 the right to vote at the age of twenty-one made women's electoral privileges in Britain in all respects identical with those of men.

This universal female suffrage means that the Anglo-Saxon democracies are now subject to the control of women, for there are many more women of voting age than there are men. This is true simply and primarily because women live longer than men. There is also the fact that several occupations such as military, naval, and

mercantile marine service, engineering, and salesmanship of various kinds are followed wholly or chiefly by men and tend to take these men away from their places of legal residence. The result is that men are less likely than women to be in their home precincts on election day, and absentee voting, with its inevitable and necessary restrictions, has not made much appeal to the electorate.

Inventions did not, as their more worthy promoters dreamed, prove to be a cure-all for the ills of the world. Universal education, that is, universal literacy, has likewise not been the success its early proponents both desired and anticipated. Nor has universal suffrage had the rosy results that its militant supporters predicted and honestly regarded as certain. The newly enfranchised women did not throw themselves behind any one cause. They at once split into parties and into factions, very much as men had done. For women as for men the situation is aptly summed up in the meditation of Private

Willis of the Coldstream Guards in W. S. Gilbert's *Iolanthe*:

> Then let's rejoice with loud fal, lal,
> fal, lal, la!
> That Nature wisely does contrive
> (fal, lal, la!)
> That every boy and every gal
> That's born into the world alive
> Is either a little Liberal
> Or else a little Conservative.
> Fal, lal, la!

Like men, women disagree on economic principles, on political expedients, even on right and wrong!

But women collectively are unlike men in one thing—they have the ultimate responsibility. Whether or not they want this responsibility, it is forced on them by the fact that they are a majority. Their very majority challenges them. They must justify their control of England and America or anticipate the likely decline of feminism and perhaps even the fall of Anglo-Saxon civilization.

Women must above all else beware of uninformed idealism. Because there is no evil in a woman's heart, she is prone to think there is no evil in the world. But there is evil in the world. Brute force is rampant and is striking down idealistic peoples one by one.

Women will continue to share with men the duty of terminating the economic and financial depression which seems so unnecessary in a nation so richly endowed with natural resources. They will share with men the happy duty of reviving and strengthening patriotism in the hearts of Americans. They should lead men in wiping off the two foulest blots on the shield of America—crime, especially in organized forms in our great cities, and degenerate literature, concerning which there is at present entirely too much complacency.

The driving out of crime should be easy. First and foremost, let crime and politics be forever separated. If possible, secure the passage of laws preventing the criminal lawyer from holding any elective or appointive office. If such

happy laws be impossible or slow of achievement, the same goal may be reached by refusing to vote for criminal lawyers when they stand for election. In the second place, take all possible steps to provide a larger and better paid force of police officers, national and local. Nothing in the modern world is more absurd than the infinitesimal sums expended for public safety or the smallness of the monetary rewards earned by our protectors. Finally, let women completely eradicate from their minds all sentimentality toward criminals.

The driving out of degenerate literature is not so easy as the driving out of criminals, but it is even more important—partly because the literature of decadent sentimentalism encourages crime.

It is in the realm of literature that women can render the greatest service. Many of the best books and many of the most popular books of the twentieth century have been written by women—including most of the best sellers in

fiction. Above all, women are the chief readers. In some cases because of more leisure, in some cases because of more desire for culture, women in the aggregate are much greater readers than men.

Now it is in the realm of literature, where women are dominant, that women have most signally failed. They are Demand—they determine the nature of the supply, and the supply since women received power in 1920 is worse than it was before.

Whatever a man's conduct may be, he makes a sharp division between right and wrong. Though he may occasionally read a vulgar magazine he will give his approval only to decent literature. "Mirth obscene"—the term is Kipling's—may excite a man's loud and vulgar laughter, but even his low jokes are healthy. And in ages when men have been the chief clients of literature, the products of writers' minds have been clean and strong. The epics of the world were produced for men. The great

plays of Shakespeare were produced for audiences of men.

Women, on the contrary, are more likely to tolerate decadent books. Perhaps because they have determined to be personally aloof from vice, they wish in literature a vicarious experience of it. Perhaps they do not know enough about vice to recognize its fearful insidiousness. In any case enough women to keep the bad traffic going read decadent books. Walk through a train and see who's reading the neurotic novel; examine the patron-list of the "shocking shelf" in a provincial circulating library; look at the programs of clubs—and women will be convicted.

When the women of the eighteenth century were addicts of sentimentalism they were ashamed of their addiction or were, at any rate, afraid of the consequences if their addiction should be known. In *The Rivals* the master portrayer, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, offers what was doubtless a typical scene:

> Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, quick!—Fling *Peregrine Pickle* under the toilet—throw *Roderick Random* into the closet—put *The Innocent Adultery* into *The Whole Duty of Man*—thrust *Lord Aimsworth* under the sofa—cram *Ovid* behind the bolster—there—put *The Man of Feeling* into your pocket—so, so—now lay *Mrs. Chapone* in sight, and leave Fordyce's *Sermons* open on the table.

But the women of today who follow the flag of decadent sentimentalism are not ashamed. They are brazen. Admiring the term sophistication, and extending it, for the most part unconsciously, to include depravity, they flaunt their reading habits in the face of respectable people. Their leaders give public reviews of the works of writers (usually men) who, under a sterner government, would be in jail on corruption-of-morals charges. And often their clubs pay well for lectures by the same men or select from the little "literary" men of the neighborhood the least manly as a guide in their reading of recent literature.

The situation is much worse than it seems. Pope summed it up for all future times in four famous lines in his *Essay on Man*:

> Vice is a monster of such fearful mien,
> As to be hated needs but to be seen;
> But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Pope knew psychology, the working of the mind and the soul. The reading of evil books most certainly does corrupt a reader. "Depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop," said Sir Anthony Absolute, another character in *The Rivals*, "that they who are so fond of handling the leaves will long for the fruit at last." Congreve's line on Amoret

> She is the thing that she despises

describes the outcome for many a modern woman. Now anything that tends to corrupt the minds of even a small number of women is dangerous to a race and to a nation. The reading of evil books is thus seen to be unmitigatedly bad.

But no one in America believes that a majority of American women—or a fourth of them, or a tenth of them, for that matter—really want bad books, books in which sympathy and laudation are given to habits and views inimical to Anglo-Saxon ideals and to American nationhood. It is therefore the duty of the great decent majority of American women to change a situation which is one of the chief menaces to the American people today.

The true function of literature is so well known that a statement of it is a platitude. Its function is to present an image of life, to portray life as the heroic and dynamic thing that it really is. Shakespeare said that literature should hold the "mirror up to nature" and in the mirror he saw the inherent nobility of mankind:

> What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!

Even when this glorious "man" was in situations devoid of hope, Shakespeare did not falter:

> In the corrupted currents of this world
> Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
> And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
> Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above.

One can believe in life as portrayed by Shakespeare. Pope said that the function of literature is "to give us back the image of our mind." A reader in the eighteenth century might well believe in the image of life caught by him who wrote:

> Honor and shame from no condition rise;
> Act well your part, there all the honor lies.

No one has expressed the true function of literature better than Archibald MacLeish:

> Poetry which owes no man anything owes nevertheless one debt—an image of mankind in which men can again believe.

Now American literature in the twentieth century has signally failed in this high function. The decadent sentimentalists are seeking to

corrupt the image of mankind—to make readers see in the mirror of literary art a distorted image of life. Even those of our writers who are not contaminated with decadent sentimentalism are not known for bold and positive images of life.

Even our greatest poets scarcely qualify. Robinson wrote some glorious poetry, but too many of his characters have the "satanic kink" which cut Flammonde and Richard Cory off from their proper destiny. Some of Frost's work is valuable, perhaps imperishable, but one would hardly look to his dying New England for an image of life in which men can believe. Lindsay came near the mark but unfortunately won such a following as he had less by his solid achievement than by his freakish poems. Even MacLeish, who states the problem, fails to qualify. He is too full of the needless conceit of allusion to obscure European people and places, and he has "felt his mind sink within him" far too usually to be an affirmative poet. T. S.

Eliot, whom some critics take seriously, fails even more signally to qualify. His provincial pride in curious specialized knowledge is sophomoric in every sense of the term. In "The Hamlet of A. MacLeish," MacLeish describes himself as irresolute and melancholy, but Eliot feels that he is even less than a vacillator. In the presumably autobiographic "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," he likewise represents himself as a Shakespearean character:

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince . . . [I am] a bit obtuse,
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost at times the Fool.

Two writers, Edna Saint Vincent Millay and Edgar Guest, are so popular that they demand mention with the greater poets. Surely in Miss Millay's indelicate revelations there is nothing for mankind to believe. And Guest's enormous output has cut him off from a proper regard

for form. A supreme poet is a rare phenomenon; not every period has one. There was no supreme poet writing in England in 1785—none in 1831. Great was Robinson, great is Frost, great perhaps is MacLeish, but there is no supreme poet in America today.

The task of reorienting our literature so that it will give us a major poet who in turn will give us an image of life in which we may believe is no easy one. But it is the most important task that confronts Twentieth Century America. And to it the women of America should turn with all their heart and with their great collective strength.

Women could perform a major service by having some national organization with patriotic motives establish a book-reviewing periodical independent of advertising and independent of propaganda. Perhaps a group of such organizations might join in sponsoring such a periodical.

But, the aroused women of America will,

better than any adviser, know how to act. By withholding patronage from stores that stock bad books and from publishers that print them; by cancelling subscriptions to periodicals that advertise them; by seizing the control of clubs from the element that revels in vicarious vice which will not long remain vicarious; finally by treating bad books with silence rather than by denunciations of publicity value the task can be effected. But it can be even more quickly effected if the vague but powerful force of social pressure is called in as an aid—even as it has been called in by the vicious minority.

The task is, finally, squarely on the shoulders of the women. They gave us evil literature. Now let them take it away. Other failures in the modern world they share with men; this is theirs only, for they are the readers. They owe America a cleanup; and they owe it above all to themselves. After centuries of repression, a gallant campaign in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave women their

freedom. Repression will certainly return if women fail in the exercise of this freedom—this still very new freedom. The greatest challenge to them is to clean up literature in America. Their failure to do so will be the knell of feminism as a respectable force in American life.

The proud women of America, especially the young ones, the ladies of the future, are well qualified for this most difficult task. They are healthy in mind and body. They are educated. They have or will have leisure. They understand organization. For the most part they are inspired with high ideals of public service. Let them turn to the Herculean task of cleaning the Augean stables of contemporary American literature. They can succeed, and in so doing they will wipe a foul stain off the new shield of feminism. They will also serve their children and their children's country, America. They will also help save democracy.

CHAPTER IX

Action in the Hour Before Dawn

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A FEW years ago a congressman was making a speech. He was a man of great affability and some ability; and his audience, even though he was speaking at a college, was far from small. The congressman's theme, repeated again and again, was to this effect: "Congress is not responsible for wrong conditions in this country: You the people are responsible. It is up to you the people to remedy them." At the close of his speech the congressman asked for questions. After several perfunctory ones, an earnest auditor arose and spoke thus: "Sir, you have inspired us with zeal to serve our country; we wish to correct the wrongs of which you have told us. You say the remedies are in our hands. I presume you would recommend that we vote for the candidates of your party which is also the party of most of us. Apart from that, what

would you have us do? What can we do this morning or this year to help?" The bell rang dismissing the assembly before the congressman reached any specific suggestions.

It would seem, however, that it is ill-advised for a speaker or writer to perturb people by calling their attention to a duty without making the duty plain, or to advise them to correct wrongs without some suggestions as to a possible method of procedure.

No one who has read thus far in *Image of Life* can be unaware of the author's views on crime and criminal literature and of certain procedures he believes would be useful in eliminating these threats to Anglo-Saxon traditions and to Americanism. Even at the risk of some repetition, it may be well, however, to bring the book to a close by a summarization of several specific ways which individuals and groups may follow in achieving so great and desired a goal. The ways here listed are not listed as the only ways or even the best ways, but they are at least

some of the ways which might be followed in bringing America back to an era of decency and patriotism.

First of all, decadent sentimentalism should be recognized and stamped out wherever it raises its head in public affairs. Sympathy should be diverted from criminals to the victims of criminals. A keen constructive interest should be taken in the police force in all its branches. Laws should, where necessary, be amended to protect the guardians of our lives and to make their operations more easy. There is hardly a city or other unit in America which has enough policemen and other guardians of public safety and there is hardly a unit, likewise, which pays them what they deserve in comparison with the sums received by men of similar importance in other governmental agencies or in private enterprise. And such an increase in pay cannot be opposed on the grounds of economy. The decrease in the crime bill would far more than take care of the additional money expended for

salaries. There would be by-products, too. The increased wages or salaries would decrease any likelihood of collusion between police and law-violators and would, on the whole, attract to the profession a larger number of men from whom, of course, a better selection of personnel could be made.

The second thing is to refuse resolutely to vote for a criminal lawyer for any public office. A person's chief friends are very likely to be those he meets in his business or profession. A teacher's chief friends are his students and his former students. A minister's chief friends are members of his congregation. Are not a criminal lawyer's chief friends the criminals he has successfully defended? Having accepted their money, is he not obligated to them? And can he properly serve both them and his country? A high government official has recently stated that the criminal lawyer rather than the actual perpetrator of the crime is the real problem in America's fifteen billion dollar crime bill. Can

there then be any excuse whatever for electing a criminal lawyer to public office? Moreover, our legislative bodies are now, for the most part, made up chiefly of lawyers. The reason is clear. Doctors, mechanics, farmers, teachers, carpenters, and followers of other trades and callings have to work or be at the place of their duties five or six days a week or even—in the case of farmers and doctors—seven days a week. The lawyer, on the contrary, especially one with not too much business, is relatively free between the sittings of court and can devote himself to his campaign. The public should learn, then, to vote for a candidate not on the basis of a personal appeal or promises, but on the basis of a reputation for character and integrity.

In the third place, there should be a resolute boycott of indecent literature. Unless the boycott is resolute it will do more harm than good, for the news stories of an unsuccessful boycott will merely advertise the indecent book. If the trustees of a library find that a book is really

indecent or subversive, they should not merely ban the book, but should ban for a definite period all books published by the house which issued the indecent book. If a store sells a book which is really evil and dangerous to morality, no patronage whatever should be extended to that store. If it is a department store, its shoe and cosmetics departments should be avoided as long as the bad book is on sale in the book department. If it is a drug-store, one should buy sodas and have prescriptions filled elsewhere until the objectionable magazines are no longer offered. Conversely, of course, support should be extended to firms and stores which conform to a code of decency. In the wide field here included under the term *literature* an early duty is the driving out of the loathsome drug-store and news stand magazines. Little will be accomplished however unless the aroused public drives out at the same time lecherous books by authors who enjoy a built-up literary reputation among subversive and deluded people.

These "literary" men, who portray decadent characters, are the "front" for the whole business of criminal literature and for the crime that is allied to such literature. Their works and the works of the "critics" who endorse them are more harmful than the foul magazines, for they are more insidious and they corrupt people who exert influence in education and even in the church. Subversive literary men are the masterminds and the evil magazines are the field agents in recruiting young Americans for careers of crime.

The citizen who is interested in improving his country should, in the fourth place, write his views in letters under appropriate circumstances. It is perhaps unfortunate, but undeniably true that letter-writers wield a powerful influence in America. Along with the constant newspaper and magazine "polls" of citizens and voters, letters are the modern politician's method of keeping his ear to the ground. This fact was startlingly illustrated in 1939 by a high execu-

tive's issuing a statement justifying a certain governmental stand by an analysis of the correspondence received on the subject. Since the letter wields this influence, and since it is one of the chief weapons of the organized minority, public-spirited citizens should use it, too. They should write to members of state legislatures, United States Congressmen and Senators, and other government officials endorsing or urging measures which the writers believe necessary for the good of the country. Similar letters of support should of course be written to any others, in or out of government service, who are under the fire of minorities for courageous work in behalf of decency, morality, and patriotism.

In the fifth place, people who desire a perpetuation of all the virtues summed up in the phrase "the Anglo-Saxon tradition" should realize that that tradition is founded on well-run local communities. The great novelist Thomas Hardy signed himself in his later years

Thomas Hardy, O.M., J.P.

The O.M. stands for Order of Merit, an order bestowed on but a handful of the most illustrious in any one generation—the great generals, admirals, writers, and scientists of a period in the annals of Imperial Britain. The J.P. stands, as in America, for Justice of the Peace. In other words one of the twenty-four great men of the empire did not count himself too busy or too important to accept an honor from his homefolk and to exert himself in their behalf. If all the communities are what they should be, America will be what it should be. If the communities are not what they should be, there is no conceivable way in which America can be what it should be. Let men and women then feel the disgrace of saying they are too busy for local responsibility. Let them take their turn on school boards, public health committees, and the committees controlling the many worthy outdoor organizations for boys and girls. No one is too important or too busy for such work and all citizens should, according to their

talents, take part in it. There is not only local service but national service in community work. If for instance there is no outlet for obscene literature in a community—and this community is typical—obscene literature will cease to be published, for the profits from it will dry up. The national service of a well-run community is seen also in the fact that such communities are the only bulwark of a democracy. When a community cannot manage itself but passes a problem to a higher unit of government, it is taking government further away from the people and driving, in effect, a nail into the coffin of democracy—a coffin always kept handy by those interested in democracy's decline and death.

In the sixth place, it is well that citizens move collectively as well as individually—or, even, in the case of taking action against other individuals, rather than individually. A druggist, for instance, might not be inclined to heed one person's suggestion that he discontinue to sell a

certain magazine, but he might—unless in a downtown location in a large city—be almost compelled to heed a suggestion coming from two score or two hundred members of a civic-minded club or group of clubs. The action of the members of a patriotic group will also tend to insure fairness. One individual might well fail to judge accurately, for instance, whether a certain college teacher or even a certain book deserves hostile action. The views of a group would be fairer, would carry more weight, and certainly the trustees of a college or the purchasing agent of a store would be more inclined to listen to a person who represented a large group of patrons.

Newspaper accounts in the spring of 1940 report the quick and thoroughgoing success of community efforts organized in several parts of America for the purpose of driving out obscene literature by a complete boycott of those offering it for sale. Whether new groups or old are to undertake the work is of little consequence.

One method may work best in one area; another method in another. The less uniform the pattern, the more local the method, the more democratic the boycott will be. Certainly in some towns the federation of women's clubs might undertake the task. In others, patriotic societies such as the Daughters of the American Revolution or—to skip to the present—the Women's Auxiliary of the American Legion might attempt it. "Dads' Clubs" and Parent-Teacher Associations, and the numerous social societies which are affiliated with Protestant and Catholic churches are other organizations which could well help. Whether the organization which leads the clean-up is local or national, whether it already exists or is formed for the purpose, it should make sure of the justice of the proposed action and then stand firm until its noble purpose has been achieved.

The last suggestion—and it is a suggestion without which *Image of Life* could not be brought to a proper close—is that those who

set out to help rid America of crime and the obscene literature which leads people to crime should not doubt the certain success of their cause. The English race faces in 1940 many grave problems. But it has faced them often in the past. And it has always faced them with success. The great race has survived external wars and civil wars, political and religious discord, and revolutions in thought and in industry. Out of all of this have come the two best great nations in the history of the world—the British Empire and the United States of America. Problems are perennial. Crises are perennial. This book has examined the current state of literature. Much that is good has been noted and the present achievements and vast possibilities of the talking-picture and radio have been discussed. Chief stress has, however, been placed on a very grave problem, the alliance of certain professors, critics, authors, and publishers with subversion and crime. This problem threatens the vitality of our race in America and

threatens our democracy. That the vast majority of Americans are resolutely set against crime and criminal literature cannot be doubted. That the moral earnest patriotic element will prevail cannot be doubted. Best of all, the dominance of that element can be predicted in the near future. There are many signs that America is becoming disgusted with crime and its criminal attorneys and with the allied endorsers, authors, and publishers of books and magazines which incite to crime.

This is a moment not for despair—but for well directed knockout blows, and for the joy that comes with boldness. On an arc as old as time man's institutions swing as a pendulum, and the literary pendulum is now moving in the right direction. It was ancient Euripides (480-406 B.C.) who wrote

> The darkest hour of ill
> Breaks brightest into dawn.